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# THE BELL OF ST. PAUL'S

BY

WALTER BESANT,
AUTHOR OF "DOROTHY FORSTER," "THE INNER HOUSE,"
ETC. ETC.

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# THE BELL OF ST. PAUL'S.

## PART I.

### CHAPTER I.

#### BEFORE THE PLAY BEGINS.

THE well-known and always popular Common Lodging House in Sweet Lilac Walk, Spitalfields, has changed hands more than once since the year 1868. Had one nothing better to do, it would be interesting to follow the fortunes of the successive Chiefs of this institution, as well as the fate of those who have enjoyed its luxuries. This research, however, must be abandoned for other hands, younger and stronger. As regards the appearance of the House in that year, it was very much the same as it is now. For public opinion in such matters is conservative: paint costs money; mere ornament is useless ostentation: even if you were to gild a lodging-house you could do no more than fill it: window cleaning, floor scrubbing, door-step whitening, furniture dusting, and the sweeping of stairs and passages all require the personal effort of somebody—who must be

paid: and why perform a task which is neither needed nor appreciated? Would our gallant Tars continue to holystone the decks if their officers ceased to require of them that duty? Certainly not. Then why blame the Master, Warden, Principal, or Dean of the Common Lodging House in Sweet Lilac Walk because he neglects what he is not called upon or expected to perform?

The least desirable, and the cheapest, part of the establishment twenty years ago—perhaps it is so still—was a certain room in the basement. Here there were no beds, every man, woman, and child sleeping on the floor without either bedding or blanket. There was not so much as a wisp of straw to mitigate the hardness of the boards—you cannot even now, I believe, buy or borrow such a thing as a wisp of straw in the whole of Spitalfields. For all alike there was the floor to lie upon, unless the lodgers preferred to lean against the wall. Yet, since room must be always left for the exercise of choice and individual taste, there were favourite and eligible sites in which the sleeper could be agreeably, gently, and gradually warmed all over by the fire, just as there were others where one would be frozen by distance or roasted by undue proximity.

The room was filled every night. Its occupants were those whom we associate with the Lowest Depth —ignorantly, because no one, not even a Hospital Nurse, has ever found the Lowest Depth. The people who frequent such a room seem at first as if they must be an interesting folk, from whose strange and varied experiences we might be led to expect whole mines of accumulated wisdom and treasures of sagacity. On examination, however, we find that their experiences

have all gone for nothing. Their minds are empty, entirely empty. What they learn one day they forget the next: in fact, they never do learn: they do not put together events and draw conclusions: they pay no heed to the wants and desires of any but themselves; they know not any past and they look not for any future: their ideas on the conduct of life have nothing at all to do with the complex civilisation which is around them but does not contain them.

There is a possible classification of mankind which no philosopher, to my knowledge, has hitherto considered. I mean, one based upon the wants, the desires, the aspirations, and the prayers of man, as they vary according to his various social levels. You, dear reader, if you were pressed to own the truth, would doubtless confess that you continually desire above all things the spiritual gifts and graces, and ask for nothing but to advance daily in the practice of virtues too lofty to be even suspected by your humbler brother. You are, in fact, about to take a First Class (Honours) in the Virtue Tripos. On the other hand, your inferior brother—he of the so-called Lowest Depth—if he ever prays (which is indeed doubtful), or if he ever formulates his wants (which he certainly cannot do), would ask for warmth first—warmth is the first factor in physical comfort—and for drink next. Thirdly, he would ask for food; fourthly, for tobacco. As for society: conversation: respectable attire: cleanliness: love: sympathy: self-culture: knowledge: godliness—all these things will come to him by degrees, as one ascends the scale. But at first—*down there*—he asks for nothing but the simplest elements of physical comfort.

The lodgers, then, being such as these, came to the bare room because it was cheap and warm. Here there was every night a great fire built up—one that would last from midnight until six in the morning: they had, therefore, warmth. A jet of gas was also burning all night, so that the people had light. The lodgers dropped in one after the other and lay down; soon they grew warm: perhaps they were hungry—well, no great matter, better a hundred nights without supper than one in the cold. The air of the room presently became so foul that it might have reminded the historical student (if any were present) of Newgate, Ludgate, or the Compter in the old days. They cared nothing for the foul air: they were warm. The walls streamed: the floor was hard: the place was crammed: their companions were as wretched as themselves:—but they were warm. In the morning they would have to get up and go out and face the cold again: meantime, they were warm.

He who is down, sings the sweet poet of Bedford Clink, need fear no fall. The thought is doubtless a consoling boon to all those who are down. It should be graven on the pewter pots. These people were certainly very low down: their histories, had they been investigated, would have been those of the stonebroke sporting man; the clerk with a lost character; the workman out of work; the penniless thief; the unrepentant —though middle-aged—Magdalene; the bankrupt shopkeeper; the once brilliant masher of the music hall; the prison bird out for a spell of freedom; the tramp of the casual ward: they were, no doubt, all here, with *their wives* and lady loves. But it is twenty years ago: *the goodly company* of this night must be nearly all

dead. Why disturb the rubbish heap of twenty years? Besides, their successors we have always with us; their stories—which require a good deal of artistic dressing —are always the same; if any of that night's company still survive, their remaining days will be few and evil indeed—full of pneumonia, bronchitis, rheumatism, lumbago, sciatica and asthma: they must now, those who are left, be drawing very near to the clean white bed in the quiet ward, where, after they have undergone the last indignity which Civilisation has in store for them—namely, that of being washed all over—they will be most tenderly cared for; and when the last hour comes they will receive from the Nurse—or perhaps from the Sister, or even from the Chaplain himself—a kindly and affectionate dismissal upon that lonely journey of which we poetically say that it leads—"Whither?"

They lay asleep side by side all through the night. There was no talking: some groaned who had pains; some snored; some coughed; some lay like logs, and some rolled and fidgeted. When the day began they got up, pulled their rags and duds together, and miserably sallied forth without so much as a good morrow, to look for windfalls and strokes of luck: their hands and eyes keen to take advantage of careless costers and purblind salesmen; ready to pick up unobserved trifles, corner bits, block ornaments, scraps, shards, and shreds; open to receive alms and doles if any should be offered; professing to yearn for jobs and the hardest kinds of work, and lamenting the difficulty of finding employment however tough. But for the most part these *people love* not odd jobs, and cannot abide re-

gular work—the tramp-casual feels the curse of labour more keenly than his richer brothers: for choice they wait on the Great God Luck, the only deity whom they worship. Some of them have once been steady workmen, perhaps, in the past; but, look you, when a man has been out of work for six months and has pledged his tools, and has dropped out from the company of former mates, he has lost more than his wages: skill and sleight of hand have gone as well; worst of all, the power of work has gone. He cannot work. Whatever offers, he can work no longer. Let us pity the poor casual as much as we possibly can: no creature is more deserving of pity because he cannot be helped upwards. If any one were to give him work to do he could not do it: he can no longer climb, he can only eat. He is condemned to remain, for the rest of his miserable life, a larrikin, a loafer, a hoodlum, a tramp: a creature who will steal, devour, and destroy, but will not produce.

The lodgers, therefore, in this warm room got up when the October sun began to shine upon the streets of Spitalfields. Observe that the sun falls as pleasantly and cheerfully upon these dingy streets as upon the red and golden leaves of the Forest a hundred miles away. By seven o'clock the gas was turned down; the fire had burned itself to white ashes; and the room, save for three children, was quite empty.

These children were lying together in a corner, their arms and legs a good deal mixed, and their heads triangularly disposed, so that each should find upon the other a soft and warm pillow. As for the grace and beauty of the grouping, no young Princes could dispose

of themselves more picturesquely than these three little gutter children, all in rags, their faces and hands smirched, their feet bare. They were all three sleeping still.

When the company of the night got up and went forth, one by one, they left open the street door. Then the air, which in the morning is quite as sweet, cool, and refreshing in Spitalfields as in Hyde Park, began to pour into the narrow passage, and thence to fall and flow in a soft, noiseless, and copious cascade down the stairs and into the basement room, rising by degrees, as a lasher rises after rains have swollen the mountain streams. When this cold but invisible pool had risen to a height of four inches and a half the children began to be restless. They rolled their heads: they opened their hands: they began to dream. Naturally, they dreamed that their headaches were gone—they always had a headache in the morning: that they were neither hungry nor cold: that there was nothing to be afraid of, no cuffs and kicks to expect: that the whole of terror had gone out of their lives: that they were in Heaven —only they knew not the name of the lovely place: that they were sucking oranges, and that their pockets were full of brown sugar. This blissful vision lasted for the space of a minute and a half. Still the cold air continued to mount higher. The children shivered and kicked, clung closer to each other, awoke with a start, and then, with one consent, sat up, rubbing their eyes, and looking about them, conscious that another day had begun. And they wondered, being quite experienced people, though not yet in years, what the day would produce in the way of grub. To such chil-

dren there is neither breakfast, lunch, dinner, tea, nor supper: every meal is a moveable feast: they eat what they can get, and when it comes. A hunch of bread may be breakfast, lunch, dinner, tea, or supper: a snack of fried fish—but oh! how seldom it is exhibited except in the shop window!—is a banquet whenever it appears.

As for the fresh air, it mounted higher and higher, inch by inch, driving before it the foul and poisonous breath of the night. Most of this, being forced up the chimney and so discharged upon the roof, rolled heavily about, a deadly, poisonous vapour, until it was blown to pieces, chemically changed, and absorbed with the wholesome smoke of the chimney-pots. It lay clinging to the sloping tiles, it surged over invisible—yet it could be felt—upon the gutters, and rolled into the spout. Here it fell upon three young sparrows, who at the first breath of this deadly brew, gasped, turned back their eyes and dropped forward on their beaks with stiffened limbs, thus cruelly cut off in early promise. The Tom, who was watching them with a half formed intention from the ambush of the chimney, escaped with typhoid and six weeks of hospital.

The three children "belonged"—the word must not be taken in its narrowest sense—to a woman who was standing at the street door, her hands upon her hips, a shawl over her head. She was a stout and strong woman whose red and brawny arms proclaimed a strength surpassing that of her sex in general. Her face was weather-beaten, her eyes were black, and her coarse black hair was thick and plentiful. She was—alas for perished youth!—fifty years of age or more.

Perhaps in early days her features might have been comely: perhaps not; and to us, really, it matters very little. Her cheeks were blotched; her neck was thick and puffy; her eyes were watery; her lips trembled. These are signs which we commonly associate, rightly or wrongly, with strong drink. She was a woman of terrifying aspect, before whose wrath the bravest man would crouch or fly. She stood at the open door, looking down the narrow street as if she expected some one. In fact she had an appointment; and while she waited a gentleman appeared walking quickly down the street in order to keep that engagement.

Twenty years ago the appearance of a gentleman in a Spitalfields back street was rare—one should not throw mud at ancestors, but this fact cannot be denied. Therefore, those of the inhabitants who were in the street looked surprised; those who feared the police in plain clothes effaced themselves; those who were in the upper chambers regretted that they had no flower-pot to drop upon the head of the visitor: it was felt that if it had been evening instead of morning, if the street had contained its full population, united action might have bustled the stranger out of his purse, watch, chains, rings, pins, handkerchief, pocket-book, silk hat, and broadcloth, and sent him forth, as Ratcliffe Highway in the good old days loved to dismiss its sailors, into the wide wide world with nothing upon him but a newspaper—and that not the thick and solid *Times*—to keep off the cold and wind and rain.

The gentleman, however, walked along as if he was not in the least afraid of receiving these attentions. In fact, he was not one of those who are afraid of back

slums, and if anybody had tried to bustle him there would have been a surprise for that bustler. He was a man about forty, strong, black bearded, well set up.

"Well, old lady," he said, in a clear ringing voice, "I am not too early, I see. You are up with the lark of Bethnal Green: you soar and sing at Heaven's gate: your heart is full of praise and your every breath is a hymn. Come down to earth. Alight upon the dewy sward. Where's the boy?"

"He's in the house," the woman replied, with a flash in her eye which showed that she was swift to wrath and that she only stood nonsense for commercial reasons. "As for parting with one of those dear children——"

"Yes, I know. Stow that and bring out the boy. Stay! Let me go and find him."

The woman led the way down the stairs. The three children were now on their feet, shivering in their bath of fresh air, and wondering why they had been left so long. As a rule the duties of the day—that is, the cadge for coppers and crusts, the cuffs and clouts, the bustle and business of the lively street—had already begun by this time. They were hungry, of course, but that was no new thing. There were two boys and a girl. All three were dark-skinned and black-eyed; all three had thick masses of black hair. The two elder looked as if they would grow up into comely youth, if they only got a fair show and a sufficiency of food. The youngest, however, was a most curiously ugly child; his hair was like a coarse mat; his forehead was broad and square but much too large for his face; his black eyes were large and hollow; his nose was almost flat;

his sunken cheeks, wide mouth, and pale face produced the disagreeable impression of a skull with a skin drawn tightly over it.

All three children, at the appearance of their guardian, shrank back and lifted up their hands as if to ward off a blow.

"Here they are, Sir," said the woman.

"I see. And this"—he laid his hand upon the head of the youngest—"is the one I have bought."

"Buy them all, good gentleman," said the woman. "You can have the lot, if you like. Here's Sal: she's eight already and clever—why, there's no name for her cleverness. She'll be a credit to any one who has the bringing of her up: there's nothing you can't teach Sal. And as for looks, if you think of them, in eight or nine years more she'll be fit for silk stockings, and a carriage of her own. Buy her, good gentleman. You shall have her cheap. There's the other boy, too—my little Pharaoh—the image of his father. Buy the lot."

"No," said the good gentleman; "one is enough for me. The other two jewels shall remain to become your pride and joy, the stay and comfort of your age, my pearl of grandmothers." He took the youngest of the three children by the arm and drew him gently from the other two. "Now, granny," he said, "remember our conditions. I am to take this boy and you are not to follow him up, or to seek out where he is, or to molest him in any way. He goes out of your hands altogether. In return I take him and bring him up at my own expense, and I give you for him five pounds —five golden sovereigns."

"Right, Sir. And if you'll take the other two as well——"

"What is his name, did you say?"

"We call him Sammy."

"Sammy—not as yet a son of the Church: not Samuel; not baptised, I presume? Quite so—Sammy, or Sam. And his surname, if he has one?"

"His father's name was Stanley."

"Stanley. A good old name. The excellent man is now—where is that father, now?"

"How should I know? On the road, somewhere, he is. He left her."

"Her? His wife, perhaps?"

"She was my daughter," the good lady replied, perhaps with evasion—"and she's dead. She died in the London Hospital and left the three kids to me. He's away somewhere in the country."

"That was hard upon you. Well, this little Prince has a right royal inheritance. His grandmother is—yourself. His father is one of the Nomads who love the black tent and the travelling caravan. His mother is an unknown factor. I should say that his inheritance, if he ever comes to his own, will be the Vice of all the ages. Lucky little devil! Could I have a better subject?"

The woman heard but understood not.

"Well, old lady, here's the money." He opened his purse and took out five sovereigns. She held out her hand greedily. "Stop!" he said. "Remember the conditions."

"I'll keep them true. I will, s'elp me."

"Sal"—she had followed the gentleman to the door and watched him down the street—"Sal," she cried, "come up quick. Go after the swell. Find out where he goes. Don't let him see you. Run after him if it is to the end of the world. If you dare to come back without finding where he takes the boy, I'll——"

A mere threat, however vigorous and terrible, only demands the recognition of history when it has been actually carried out. This threat was not carried out.

For eight years of age Sal was remarkably clever and full of resource. She followed the gentleman along Commercial Street to Shoreditch: here he called a four-wheeler, which drove off briskly towards the City. The girl's knowledge of Spitalfields and Bethnal Green—an intricate maze of streets—was profound, considering her youth, but of the City she knew nothing. And here as the crowd grew thicker and it was difficult to run on the pavement and keep a watch on the cab, she took the opportunity of a stoppage and climbed up behind. The people hurrying along Citywards were all, at that hour of the morning, namely, between eight and nine o'clock, the young ladies and gentlemen employed in the City shops: the boys among them too dispirited, thinking of the day's work before them, to remind a cabman of a cut behind: Sal therefore remained undisturbed.

The cab went down Bishopsgate Street and Gracechurch Street: it turned westward at Cannon Street: at Queen Street it turned again to the south and crossed the river by Southwark Bridge. On the other side it presently turned to the right into a region of small streets, *with mean* houses standing among great fac-

tories. In one of these streets it stopped. Sal slid down quickly and retreated to the shelter of a neighbouring lamp-post, where, half hidden, she could watch.

When the gentleman had gone into the house and the cab had driven away, the child left her lamp-post and examined at her ease both house and street.

The house was easy to remember. It was of two stories, with three windows at the top, and two below: the door between the two was not an ordinary door, but set back in a broad frame with two short pillars, not forming a porch but flat with the front of the house. They were pillars of the Doric order, and the girl noted their shape though she knew not its name. The house was freshly painted—a very noticeable point when one looked around. And there was a brass plate on the door—the girl could not read, yet she could remember the appearance of the letters—they announced that Robert Luttrel, M.D., lived, and presumably practised the science of healing, in that house.

When Sal had thoroughly mastered these details, and was quite certain that she would know the house again immediately and without the least hesitation, she turned her attention to the street. First of all, it was unlike any street she had ever seen in the Quarter familiar to her. A street in Southwark may be mean, and so far may resemble a street in Spitalfields; but in meanness there are shades and variations. This street had several houses which called aloud for paint and washing, but they were not like the houses she knew: *it had also* two great works where steam hammers were *already practising* their trade; at the end was a yard,

belonging to other works, and in the yard were three or four great trees: there was also, though the edifice conveyed no meaning to the child of nature, a Church; and, though this fact escaped her attention, it was as profoundly ugly as they made them forty years ago. The other end "gave" upon the river. The child went to look at it. She had never before seen the river, and in fact knew not whether it was the river Thames or the river Oceanus which runneth round the world: there were barges on it, some with masts and some without; there was a steamer or two plying on the stream; across the river there was a great building, the biggest the child had ever seen.

She noted all these things, and then she addressed herself seriously and with the countenance of a responsible person to the task of getting back to Sweet Lilac Walk. To those children of luxury whose senses have never been sharpened by the goad of daily necessity, the task would have been impossible. This girl, however, had remarked on her way that the cab followed one line south, and another west, and a third south again: she had noted the houses when they turned. Therefore you will understand why she made straight for home on her return, as surely as an Indian in the forest finds his way by the marks he has made on the trees. It was perhaps part of her inheritance that she should thus be able to find her way in a labyrinth of unknown streets. I dare say she would have had no more difficulty through the blackest fog that ever fell upon the unhappy city. More than this, she afterwards, with the greatest ease, conducted to the spot her grandmother, who could not read, any more than her-

self, but who noted with care both the brass plate and the appearance of the street and begged of a resident to know its name. These items of knowledge the good lady treasured up in her heart. They were things which might some day be converted, as all kinds of knowledge are every day magically converted, into a rod and a staff for her declining years.

If you had looked into the house with the Doric pillars about eight o'clock that same evening you would have seen the boy called Sammy sitting on the hearthrug between Dr. Luttrel and another. They occupied each an armchair beside the fire and were contemplating the child—one, with the pleasurable curiosity which attaches to a Subject; the other, with undisguised loathing for a creature so horribly ugly. His new dress, in fact, made his ugliness the more remarkable. He had been washed in a tub: his hair had been cut short: his rags had been cast into a raging roaring furnace: he was dressed in a pretty garb of navy blue, including a jumper, a lanyard with a knife at the end of it, and knickerbockers. He had eaten during the day three square meals. He was sleepy; but he looked from one to the other with the watchful and suspicious eyes of a wild creature, ready at the least movement to spring to his feet, to fly, to bite, or to kick. Presently, however, his head began to roll and nod; his eyelids began to drop; his shoulders to swing unsteadily; and he sank upon the hearthrug asleep.

"This," said the Doctor, "is going to be an experiment of the greatest interest."

"Is it?" replied the other. "Meanwhile, the boy is like some dreadful dream in a nightmare."

"He is, he is. That is one of the most interesting points in the situation. Not only does he look the part, but he acts it, for the present, quite naturally. He steals; he lies; he swears. Why not? He belongs to a race conspicuous for demoniac possession. I bought him for five pounds of his grandmother. I have learned some particulars concerning that dear old lady's family. Her grandfather, a gipsy, is immortalised in the 'Annual Register' for the year 1816. He was hanged outside Newgate for a particularly brutal murder committed on the body of a foreign sailor at Wapping. As for her father, who was almost as illustrious, he died in exile at Botany Bay, in the year 1830, after a brilliant career of pig and sheep lifting; the lady herself has always been a thief and the associate of rogues, vagabonds, gipsies, tinkers and tramps; her daughter, now deceased—the mother of this boy—was apparently of the same kidney. The pedigree on the maternal side, therefore"—the Doctor laughed and rubbed his hands—"promises remarkably well. Something ought to come out of that. On the other side, I confess, we are not so rich; we have little to go upon beyond the cardinal fact that the father, like the mother, was a gipsy. But the son of a gipsy may become anything. Through how many generations of outlaws and wanderers has the blood of this boy been running?"

"You propose, then, to conquer and eradicate these hereditary tendencies?"

"Not at all. I shall make them steps by which he shall mount." The Doctor leaned forward and spoke

with great seriousness. "I have long wished, my friend, for such an experiment as is now before me. I have desired a mind to mould according to my own views. Impatience of authority is hereditary with this boy: I expect it will rule him as it ruled his forefathers; but in his case it will take a nobler form: it will enable him to act and to think for himself. The poverty of past generations will inspire him with dissatisfaction and a craving for things. His ancestors never had enough of anything: they craved for food and drink. This boy will inherit the craving, but not for food: he will desire, beyond measure, knowledge. Again, the instinct of self-preservation is most strongly developed in the creatures which are hunted. This boy's people have been hunted for hundreds of years. He will therefore inherit the instinct, strongly developed, of suspicion or watchfulness. But he will understand that the highest application of this instinct is to the advance of freedom and humanity."

"Oh!" said his companion, doubtfully.

"Then, again, none of his people have ever known morality, honour, truth, religion, or any of the virtues which we were taught in childhood."

"You will teach him these things?"

"Not at all. I shall only put him in the way of learning them. He will learn them for himself. He will deduce for himself, from his own observation, that the happiness and the safety of the individual, as well as the community, depend upon the observance of these virtues by himself and by his friends. He will perceive that he must give as well as take, in order to secure the possibility of getting and the security of having.

Then there will gradually spring up in his mind a Natural Religion on which, if he pleases, he may build any ecclesiastical structure that he may admire. In all these things he will be quite free."

"And meantime——?"

"Meantime he will be watched until he lose his present habits of stealing and lying. They will gradually drop off."

"Humph! Yet I doubt."

"You, Clement, are a poet."

The other blushed with irrepressible pride. "An unsuccessful poet," he murmured. Anybody may be unsuccessful, but to be a poet happens to few. Somehow, like the child, he looked the character, having soft blue eyes, a gentle voice, and an unpractical manner, to say nothing of beautiful brown curls and a long beard as glossy as silk.

"Yet a poet. You have read, as well as written, reams of stuff about as real applied to life as the colours of sunrise over Nature."

"Nothing is real except these colours."

"Well, this boy shall read none of these things. He shall not become a sentimentalist: he shall be brought up in no illusions. He shall learn from the first the bare, naked truth in everything. For instance, according to you and to your friends, men are always doing the most heroic and self-denying things."

"So they are—some of them."

"According to me, they are always trying to eat up each other and fighting to prevent themselves from being eaten up. I shall teach this boy from the beginning to regard every other man as a possible devourer."

"Poor little devil!" said the unsuccessful poet.

"Of course he shall be made a Physicist. I shall send him to a German University. If he imbibes a thirst for science, and if I succeed in making him see things clearly without the veil which hangs before most men's eyes, he will have a great career before him. The man without a Veil: the man without Prejudice: the man who can see clearly—think of that!"

"Again—poor little devil!" said the unsympathetic Maker.

"Then, about this hideous face of his. I know two men—both now old. They are brothers: they were originally exactly alike. One of them has given up his life to science, the other has heen peddling in small trade all his days. The face of the first brother is full of nobility and of strength: the face of the other is mean and low. Now look at this little wretch." He stooped and rolled over the sleeping head. "In twenty years the wild-beast eyes will be steadied with thought and learning: the nose will have emerged: the cheeks will have filled out: the ugly wide mouth will have contracted. Out of a mere savage, common and brutal, of the lowest type, I shall have made a specimen of manhood, such as there are few. He shall be a gentleman, though with no gentle blood in his veins: a scholar, an artist, and a physicist. And he shall look as well as play the part. He shall have a face—not like this wretched degraded type which his father and mother have given him; but a face which belongs to such a man as he will be."

"I doubt," his friend repeated. "Are you still going to call him Sammy Stanley?"

"No. He must be cut off altogether from his own people: he shall never know whence he came or to whom he belongs. He shall bear my surname, and I shall call him my son. As for Christian name, now—what shall I call him?"

"Give him one that will do for either event—failure or success."

"Very good. What shall it be? Not John or George. Say Bernard, Bertram, Guy, Harold, Oliver."

"Call him Oliver."

"I will. Oliver Luttrel. Sleep on, Oliver, unmindful of coming fate. Sleep on, Oliver Luttrel, late Sammy Stanley."

## CHAPTER II.

### A SUNSET ON BANK SIDE.

It was the evening of the longest day in all the year. For once the occasion—which is too often neglected—was recognised and honoured. There had been ordered, at the Weather Office, a day of sky so cloudless and blue, with sunshine so warm and air so soft, that all the Italian organ-grinders fell faint and sick with nostalgia, and sat down on the kerb while the women did the work for them: and those strangers who were newly arrived from New York, Melbourne, Paris, or St. Petersburg, asked if this was truly the City of Perpetual Fog. And since it is generally the practice of the English day, if it begins with sunshine, to end in cloud, it was for this occasion specially enjoined,

under penalty of the Office and all the clerks being transferred to Labrador, that the evening should until the very setting of the sun and after, continue clear, bright and beautiful.

About a quarter-past eight on this day a young man was leaning over the wooden wall of the old, first, and original—for many years the only—Embankment, called Bank Side, watching the river and the City on the other side. He stood at that spot—it is on the west of Southwark Bridge, where there are Stairs. They are not ancient Stairs; they are not those at which the Elizabethan citizens landed to see the *matinée* at the Globe, to catch a fleeting rapture at the Baiting of the Bear, or to make love among the winding walks of Paris Gardens. Formerly there were no Stairs between those of Mold Strand on the west, and Saint Mary Overies on the east. These Stairs are mere modern things constructed in the last century. But some thoughtful Resident, ancient or modern, has caused to be built above them a small pen, enclosure, or fold, furnished with two wooden benches, capable of holding at least four persons, and forming a gazebo or belvedere from which to view the river and to take the air. This young man had so luckily chosen his time and was so singularly fortunate in the day, that he had before his eyes quite the most magnificent Spectacle that the world affords. Owing to the sins of London this splendid show is seldom indeed vouchsafed: and no man is informed beforehand, not even the Meteorological Prophet, when it is going to be performed. Again, the places where one can get a really fine view of it are so few and for the most part so inaccessible—who

knoweth, for instance, the way from Piccadilly to Bank Side?—that the greater number are hindered even if they wished to assist at the representation. And lastly, the time for which the Pageant is fixed is, during the summer, inconveniently connected with the dinner-hour. For all these reasons there is never any crowd to see the Show, and the newspapers never send a reporter. Yet those who have been privileged to behold it go about for the rest of their lives declaring that there is no place like London for such a Spectacle; that the mist and moisture of the air cause the colours to be more splendid, and their infinite variety and change more wonderful, than in any other spot upon the world: and that no Transformation Scene was ever presented to an audience, even at the Lane, which can compare with the effects produced by Nature's own scene-painter. They are simple and massive, yet they are continually varying; there are no colours known to the artist like unto those which show in the West for a moment and then pass into something different yet as beautiful: no pigment was ever yet made which could represent them: they have no name: they have never been imitated in silk, satin, jute, flax, or cloth of gold: and as they vary and change from one moment to the next, advancing in splendour as the sun sinks lower, they form such a pageant as would bring tears to the eyes of the oldest Academician if he ever saw it—but he does not, being entirely occupied with the painting of portraits. The sight and the splendour of it would also cause the most conceited young poet, if he ever did see it—but he does not, being occupied wholly with Society—to creep softly and limply out of the

press, and away from the company of man for fear he should be asked to describe these glories in immortal verse.

Where the young man stood, if he looked down the river he could see, close at hand, Southwark Bridge, and, beyond it, the ugly Railway Bridge running into the ugly Railway Station: both together shut out the view of all that lay beyond—London Bridge and the Tower and the masts of the ships in the Pool. Even the most splendid sunset cannot make the Cannon Street Terminus beautiful. But if he looked up the river he saw, first, Blackfriars Bridge, standing out with sharp, clear lines, as if cut out of black cardboard; above it, the dazzling golden light of the western sky; and below it, the broad bosom of the river at the flood. The waters of the river, which under the grey sky of a cloudy day are as brown as the waters of the Arno, and even under the bluest sky of midday lack the brightness of the Tyne and the sparkle of the Usk, now reflected back the wonders of the evening, and were themselves as splendid as the skies above. Then he looked across the river. Immediately opposite rose the pile of St. Paul's, vast and majestic—Bank Side is now the only place where you have a really good view of St. Paul's. On either side of St. Paul's rose in lesser glory the spire of St. Bride, the Dragon of Bow, the pinnacles of Aldermarie, the Tower of St. Michael's, and I know not how many more of Wren's masterpieces; for though the Great Fire destroyed many Churches which were not rebuilt, and though modern barbarians have pulled down many more, London is still a City of Churches, and there are plenty left for those who,

when the Great Return takes place and the merchants once more go back to live within the City walls, will look to worship in the old Churches after the manner of their forefathers. Below the Churches, on the northern bank, are the wharves and warehouses—Paul's Wharf, Baynard's Castle, and the ancient Port of Queenhithe. This old harbour still retaineth its former shape, though its buildings, which were once low, mean, and ugly, yet picturesque, have long since been transformed into others, bigger and uglier, yet not picturesque, and even its old Church with the Golden Ship has been wickedly destroyed by the modern barbarians aforesaid.

Below him, floating bravely on the flood, were moored the broad barges which now, for their number and their goodliness, make the glory of Bank Side. Not one or two are here, but fifty or sixty or a hundred, if you were to count, all of generous tonnage and capacity not to be guessed. There were, this evening, so many of them that they extended even more than half-way across the river. Some had masts and brown canvas sails, now furled, ready to drop down as far as the Nore, if necessary; all were painted gaily with streaks of red, blue, yellow and green: some were empty and waiting for their freight: some were laden, and these seemed to be carrying away all the worthless jetsam of the City: they were heavy in the water with broken glass bottles: they were full of rusty and broken iron: they were piled as high as the arches of the Bridge with empty petroleum barrels. There were no guards or watchmen on board this great fleet—the River Police pay no attention to this marine—for who

would lift a lighter? How would one dispose of a stolen barge? What poor wretch is there in all the world sunk so low as to fill his knavish pockets with broken glass?

And on all these things alike—for the sun, whether the sun in Splendour, or the sun at his setting, knows no differences and hath no favourites—on the Dome and upper windows and the Ball and Cross of Paul's, on the Dragon of Bow, on the spires and weathercocks and chimney-pots: on the warehouses, which in the white light of noon make but a dingy show, on the clumsy barges with their brown sails, lay the splendour of the sunset, so that all was illuminated and transformed: the spires were flames of fire: the Towers belonged to some Castle of Phantasy: the warehouses were of precious marble, all purple and crimson, or veined and streaked with colour, grander than any palaces of Venice: the barges were ships of fairyland: and the river, reflecting the glory of the sky, rolled along in a broad and glowing flood finer even than the Grande Canale when the Italian sunset lies upon its waters and paints its marble stairs. For the sun of Italy is not so soft, and under the sky of Italy there lack the mists which in England assume such depth and charm of colour.

"Yesterday," said the young man, "it was all so gloomy and grey that it made one tremble and shudder. To-day it is transformed. Oh! it is like some poet's vision."

He was, for his part, neither painter nor poet: he had no knowledge, save from books, of Venice and its palaces; therefore he could not make the comparison

indicated above. There was nothing like Thames above bridge in the city of his birth or in the country to which he belonged. That city was Sydney, and that country was New South Wales in Australia; and this was only the second day of his first visit to London. Only his second day. And yet he was actually standing on Bank Side, Southwark, at a quarter-past eight in the evening, looking at the sunset, instead of sitting in the stalls listening to the overture of an Opera Bouffe. No other Colonial has ever so much as visited this spot: very few even of the natives of this great city know of it: yet this was only his second evening, and he was here watching the sunset. One would think that he had come all the way from Australia to see a sunset. Once there was a New Zealander who came to visit the land of his ancestors. He was persuaded to take up his quarters at a hotel in America Square. He stayed there for three months. Not an amusement was there throughout Ratcliffe, Shadwell, Wapping and Poplar but he found it out and took his fill of it. Then he returned home, satiated with the pleasures of London. He confessed that for the rest of his life—thank you—he would want no more of London's pleasures. Laurence Waller—this was the name of the young Australian, and he was the son of no less a Personage than Sir David Waller, K.C.M.G., Premier of New South Wales —knew more than this. Yet for a reason, he had taken a lodging on Bank Side, and this was to be his first night in that lodging.

He was not a conspirator: he was not a social reformer: he was not collecting statistics or facts: he was not compiling a book on the lower levels: he had no

theories to defend: he even disliked the lower levels, and loved a well-behaved man and a well-dressed girl very, very much better than those who are roughly mannered and ill-dressed. He was a rich young man: he was as fond of taking his pleasure as any other well-regulated young man: and he found his pleasure in much the same pursuits: that is to say, he loved to ride, shoot, act, sing, play cricket, sit out with a pretty girl, dance with her, walk with her, talk with her. He also loved to sit at his club and talk to the men. And yet he was on Bank Side. What was he doing there?

Laurence Waller was in stature somewhat taller than the average Englishman, and rather more slightly built: his face, sunburnt from a long voyage, was unmistakably English, though I suppose that Australia will develop her own types of face for herself in the course of a few more generations—she must, if she respects herself. Clearly it was a cheerful face, belonging to a young man who has no quarrel at all with the world, and as yet has found no cause of complaint as to the general management of mankind at large, or his own personality in particular: a face which inspired confidence in old ladies, young ladies, women who are not ladies, in children and in dogs; but not in betting men, welshers, and those who practise the Confidence Lay. Young gentlemen who walk as if they were accustomed to rely on themselves, and carry their hands as if they knew how to use them as fists, do not attract these honest tradesmen. His hair was of a not unusual brown, and his features were regular enough not to mar his ex-

pression. His age was well within the twenties. Since the whole of the world that is worth anything at all—love, friendship, ambition, hope, enthusiasm, good digestion, strength, and fighting power—belong essentially to the twenties, he ought on that account alone to be enormously envied by all who have passed into the thirties, or—poor beggars!—even beyond. This said, it seems an unnecessary detail that he possessed somewhat remarkable eyes: they were eyes of a clear, dark blue: eyes which were perceived at once, even by the most shallow observer, to be capable of containing and of reflecting a good deal of light: such as the light of laughter, the light of generous wrath, the light of pity, the light of sympathy, the light of enthusiasm and the light of love. It is by such lights that Australia will be advanced. One does not claim for this young man special merit on account of his eyes. Many young men betray these emotions in a similar manner. On the other hand, some young men never hang out any such signals, perhaps because they feel these things imperfectly.

Laurence presently turned from the river and looked at the place itself where he was standing.

Bank Side is not a fashionable promenade. It does not possess any of the popularity which belongs to the much grander South Embankment higher up the river —that which runs from Westminster to Vauxhall, and is adorned first by St. Thomas's Hospital—which inclines the heart of the working man to works of benevolence; and next by Lambeth Palace, which, on account of its venerable appearance, makes him for the moment tolerant of orthodoxy. Bank Side, again, never

has been fashionable. Many parts of London have at one time or the other belonged to the great world: there were Royal Palaces at Baynard's Castle; at Tower Royal; at Cold Harbour, and at St. Bride's; there were palaces in the Strand; illustrious people lived in Drury, and great nobles in Soho. Once there was a Bishop's Palace at Bank Side, but so long ago that the very memory of it has gone long since, and people have forgotten how a certain street there has gotten its name. There was a period—it only lasted twenty years or so—when the people came across from Paul's Wharf and Queen Hithe to the Falcon Stairs to see Shakespeare's new play at the Globe, the Swan, or the Rose. Then the place was inhabited by the player folk, who drank, and sang, revelled, and laughed, and quarrelled, and fought in the taverns which still—some of them—survive in obscure courts and corners of this forgotten place. The players had, for the most part, short lives, but they were merry: their friends were the poets and such as loved poetry. Their manners and morals were deplorable: their wives and mistresses were as disreputable as themselves, and were constantly getting ducked for their quarrels and their jealousies and their noisy tongues. Now they all lie buried in the churchyard of St. Saviour's, formerly St. Mary Overy. When the theatres were built across the river, the players and the poets exchanged Bank Side for Portugal Street; and presently even the Clink itself, where so many of the poor players had been laid by the heels, was pulled down. There was no longer any use in keeping up the Clink.

The young man, then, turning from the river, con-

sidered for a moment the old Embankment with its wooden walls and the houses facing it. The place was littered with coils of rusty chain and bits of rusty machinery. There were cranes for the hoisting of things in and out of the barges; there were stairs to the water; there were planks lying in position for the wheel-barrows between the Embankment and the barges: on the other side of the road were gates leading to factories, works, and wharves. Between the gates were one or two public-houses of a quiet kind, such as Legless Tom—the Dominie's Dux, in 'Jacob Faithful'—might have frequented: a shop or two of a marine or nautical description, and a few private houses. The light of sunset fell upon this place, which at other times is certainly dingy, as well as upon the river, and made it look beautiful and mysterious. It is generally unknown who are the private residents of Bank Side: if a man wished for perfect retirement, a place where his friends would never think of looking for him, where he could breathe the freshest air to be found in all London, he could not do better than to take one of these houses—there are not many—and live in it. Retirement he would have; but as for quiet, one would not promise him that, because the works, and the cranes, and the yohoing of the bargemen would deprive him of the luxury for fourteen hours out of the twenty-four. But, within one of these private houses, he would be as retired as in the heart of the great African Desert.

By eight o'clock in the evening, however, work is over on the Bank: the voices of those who yo-ho on the barges are silent: there is no more rolling of empty casks or hoisting of crates full of broken glass: the

paying out of chains has ceased: the hammering at the Steam Boiler works has stopped for the day: the Vinegar yards are deserted: the workmen have left even the public-houses, which stand open but have no custom: and Bank Side is left for the refreshment of those private folk who may choose to come here for the tasting of the fresh air.

Two or three, in fact, were walking to and fro or lounging on the wooden wall which protects the Bank from the river. The Australian stranger, observing these people, became aware—although he was a stranger and an Australian the thing struck him as incongruous—that they were, somehow, gentlefolk. Nothing had prepared him for gentlefolk in Bank Side, neither his first impression of the previous evening when he engaged his lodgings, nor a certain document in his pocket which had brought him there.

Two of them, who walked together, were men advanced in years—though still vigorous. They passed him once, twice, in silence. As he looked after them he observed that they remained silent. Therefore he rightly concluded, they must be habitual companions. Only men who know each other well are silent when they walk together. That is the true companionship of the soul when one can follow out, undisturbed, a line of thought, ready to stop at a word from the other, or receive a suggestion from him for the furtherance of that line. One of them was a tall man, but narrow shouldered and stooping. He wore a brown velvet jacket and a felt hat: his long white hair flowed in curls over his coat collar and his white beard flowed over his shirt front. His jacket was old and, as an old friend

should, it clung tightly to the arms and to the figure: his trousers had acquired a certain swelling of the knee —a disorder or deformity which is the terror of young men who love to go in dainty raiment yet have a slender purse. This gentleman, therefore, was not rich. As for the velvet jacket, the broad felt hat and the long white locks, they looked like outward signs and professional adornments, like the epaulettes of a Naval Officer, or like the hairdresser's apron. These signs may be assumed by the impostor. But the impostor cannot assume a face of delicacy, finely cut and lined, which marks the life of culture and lofty thought: nor can the impostor at sixty years of age clear his eyes of the crows-feet and his mouth of the deep trenches which betray long years spent in greed and gobbling and money-grubbing.

"An artist," said the young man, wondering that an artist should be found on Bank Side wandering about, as if he was an *habitué*. "Clearly, an artist. But, perhaps, only a photographer."

The man by his side wore a black frock coat and the tall hat common to the City and the West End. There was a certain confidence in his walk: he carried his stick as if he would use it as a weapon of offence on small provocation: his head was thrown back: his black beard, streaked with grey, looked as if it was not going to turn quite grey without a struggle: he advanced one leg as he walked, somewhat like the knave of clubs, but with less ostentation.

"Looks like a solicitor," said the young man. "Yet a solicitor on Bank Side! May be, however, a Book

Agent—or a Tout—or a Temperance Lecturer. Both of them here, perhaps, because they are down on their luck."

He came from a country where it is not uncommon to meet with gentlemen newly arrived from England, down on their luck. Here there are also many such men, but they shrink from observation. Formerly, gentlemen down on their luck found themselves in the long run comfortably settled in the King's Bench or in its Rules, where there was abundance of good company with the tradition of mirth and jollity. Both King's Bench and the Rules having been abolished, there is now no recognised Retreat. Yet in these days there are so many gentlemen down on their luck that there must be, somewhere, a colony or settlement of them living retired in some suburb, whither their old acqaintance will not follow them. I have sometimes thought of Dalston as a likely spot—there is none likelier: it is clean, airy, and remote from Pall Mall: there is no obtrusion or ostentation of wealth—it is not noisy and vulgar: yet, so far, my researches have not resulted in the proof that Dalston possesses such a colony. Some day it will as certainly be found as the present location of the Ten Tribes. When found, it will prove to be a curious colony, preserving many of the manners, customs, commonplaces and jokes which belonged to the fashionable world when the colonists retired into obscurity.

On the fourth time of passing, one of the two was speaking.

"——will be President of the Royal Society, I tell you. Yet something troubles the boy. He should be triumphant, and he is uneasy. At his age——"

"Do Presidents of the Royal Society come from Bank Side, I wonder?" murmured Laurence. "Yet, why not?"

They passed on their way and out of his hearing. Besides, it is mean for any one, except a Novelist, to listen in the street.

Then Laurence saw, standing at the open door of the house opposite—quite the cleanest and most respectable house on Bank Side—a person of spare and slight figure, with a head one or two sizes too large for his height. This is a defect by no means common. His face was smooth and young, yet his hair was grey. A large nose, assisted by a self-respecting carriage, gave him an air of quiet dignity. His dress included a black frock coat buttoned, a tall hat most carefully brushed, and an umbrella tightly rolled in its silk case. He also carried a pair of kid gloves. No part of his dress was in its first youth, or even in its early manhood, but the whole of it taken together conferred upon the wearer that now almost obsolete quality which used to be called Primness. The Prim man may linger still in old-fashioned counting-houses—I know one in a Bank—but he has become so rare that the younger folk have lost knowledge of his kind. Lesser officials of all kinds, fifty years ago, affected Primness as a part of that Personal Dignity which has been since so largely lost.

"Here is Lucius," said Laurence, sighing. "My dear mother, I hope you are satisfied, so far."

It was, in fact, none other than Mr. Lucius Cottle himself, whose lodger the young man had that day become. He descended the two door-steps with as much

dignity as if they had been the staircase of a Venetian Palazzo, and as slowly as if he had at his own disposal all the time there is.

"Take off that coat of yours," said his lodger. "Give you a swallow-tail with black silk smalls and stockings and a bunch of gold seals at your fob—and you'd do for Charles Lamb. Put you into a velvet coat, with a flowered waistcoat and a powdered wig, and give you a snuff-box—and you'd do for—for—Oliver Goldsmith himself, or the whole of the eighteenth century."

It is popularly supposed, thanks to Mr. Praed and Mr. Austin Dobson, that the eighteenth century was a period of profound repose and universal leisure. As a matter of prose it was crammed full of hurry and bustle, driving and goading, sweating and oppressing, cursing and kicking, beating, cuffing, and imprisoning. Everybody who was in service of any kind had to hurry up all day long, and the day was then very much longer than it is at present. Had Mr. Lucius Cottle, for example, lived in the last century, he would have descended those steps and gone about his business with a surprising alacrity.

"He ought to be a Justice of the Peace," said Laurence, "or the Proprietor of a Pill."

When Mr. Lucius Cottle had accomplished the descent of the steps he looked up and down Bank Side with a critical air of ownership. So the country gentleman surveys his stables and his gardens. Then he turned and contemplated the house—this at least was his own—with infinite pride. Certainly the brightest, the most recently painted, and the cleanest on the whole Embankment. It was even provided with a Virginia

creeper, now rapidly becoming green with its first shoots of spring. There were clean white curtains to all the windows: the iron railings in the front were clean: the windows were bright: the brass knocker and the handle were polished: the door-steps were white: and on the door there was a brass plate as bright as a mirror, on which was engraved, in large black letters, the name, "Mr. Cottle." Some brass plates might have announced "Cottle"—short; or "Lucius Cottle;" or "Mr. Lucius Cottle." There is, however, a simple greatness in "Mr. Cottle," as if all the world ought to know him and should speak of him respectfully, and should be glad to be told where he lived. When he had looked up and down, he crossed the road daintily, as one who goeth in white silk stockings. "You ought," said Laurence, "to have white silk stockings to set-off your thin legs. You were born for them."

"Good evening, Mr. Waller," he said, giving his hand. "You have done well, Sir, in coming to Bank Side." He spoke slowly, as if his words were valuable. "Here we breathe." He expanded his chest and waved his hands. "Here we catch the pure breeze fresh from the German Ocean. If this place were generally known, those who now live in Eaton or in Berkeley Square would gladly exchange with us who live upon the Bank."

Laurence suppressed a frivolous remark about a run upon the Bank, and wondered whether such an exchange would be afterwards considered quite fair to both parties.

"When you came to me last night, Mr. Waller," Mr. Cottle went on, "you referred me to a very re-

spectable firm—in the Lower Branch. Their assurances made me resolve to accept the responsibility of receiving you as my tenant. You are in England, they told me, on business."

"On business, Mr. Cottle."

"You are yourself also, perhaps, in the Law—in the Lower Branch?"

"No, I am not, I am sorry to say, in the Law at all—not even on its Lowest Branch."

"Well: we cannot, unhappily, all belong to the Profession. I hope, at least, that your stay may be pleasant to you, and that your business may be satisfactory." He waved his hand with an old-fashioned gesture. "You will find much that is interesting in the Quarter. As for ourselves, we are, I believe, the oldest Family of Bank Side."

"Dear me," said Laurence, smiling pleasantly. "The oldest Family of Bank Side! For my own part, I only belong to one of the youngest in New South Wales."

"We have lived here, Sir, for one hundred years. Exactly a hundred years ago my grandfather, whose origin is unknown, commenced schoolmaster in that very house. The Academy was carried on after his decease—he was buried in Cross Bones Yard—by my father for forty years with great distinction. Vicesimus Cottle, indeed, is the only English author, since Shakespeare, who has adorned Bank Side. You are acquainted, Sir, with Cottle's 'Practical Elocutionist'?"

The young man murmured something. He felt in some important points his education had been neglected. Yet he had taken Honours in the University of Sydney. The Colonial, on his first visit home, often

experiences this feeling. What is the use of the best education that the Colony affords—they pretend it to be as good as any to be had in Great Britain—if such gaps are left? Why had no one taught him that he must purchase, and diligently peruse, Cottle's "Practical Elocutionist"?

"The work," Mr. Cottle told him with severity, "was composed or compiled in the house where you will this evening sleep. You are an Australian: which may explain and excuse your ignorance. The name of Cottle has not yet—it would appear—reached your shores. This is strange: but it is on its way, Sir. It is on its way there."

"Perhaps it has already crossed the Line, by this time."

"You shall have an opportunity, Mr. Waller, while you are with us, of studying that Collection."

Laurence murmured his gratitude.

"The Society of Bank Side," the little man continued with an increase of primness, "is limited, it is true, but far more select than is generally supposed. I learn at my Chambers that we are supposed to have no Society here. The Barge and the Bank, it is believed, belong to each other. The Barge and the Bank," he repeated, to mark the alliteration. "That belief, you will find, is a mistake."

"I assure you, Mr. Cottle, that I have no belief or any opinions at all upon the subject."

"Houses make not Society, nor does a crowd create civilisation—my father's observation, Sir. Some here are working men: well, Industry produces our boasted wealth. It must therefore be respected. Again—my

father. But we have the Learned Profession represented. Those who form our Society are in the habit of meeting here on warm and fine evenings. Here we have, in fact, established an Exchange of Thought. As merchants assemble to exchange goods, so do we draw together on summer evenings to impart and receive the ideas which we conceive and form in winter. One of Vicesimus Cottle's plans, Sir, was the formation of such an Intellectual Exchange, on a larger scale."

"Indeed," said Laurence, respectfully.

"For instance, there is Mr. Indagine——"

"What?" the young man started. "I know that name."

"Mr. Clement Indagine, the Poet." He indicated the man in the velvet jacket.

"Oh!" cried Laurence, startled. "That is Clement, is it? And he is a poet, is he? I don't think I ever saw a poet before. Clement Indagine! I hardly expected—so soon. Clement! Had he not a brother?"

"Truly. You know that? The brother, Æneas, went away a great many years ago—we were all three at school together—and has never since been heard of. Mr. Indagine's companion is Dr. Luttrel, of great distinction in Science. As for me, I am in the Law—the Higher Branch, Sir," he explained with much dignity. "Law, Poetry, and Science. Could the great Embankment on the other side boast of more?"

Laurence laughed. He was one of those who laughed easily and pleasantly, and never give offence by laughing.

"Bank Side," he said, "is a busy place. That is evident from the wharves. And it has its history. That

I know. Bank Side should have its intellectual side, that, I confess, I did not suspect."

"We have more," said Mr. Cottle. "Law, Poetry, and Science, I said. The noblest virtue of mankind, as my father has observed, is Patriotism. The gentleman now approaching—look at him attentively, Mr. Waller—is a distinguished Patriot. His native country is Hungary."

So that there were four great men of Bank Side, at least, and all of them elderly. The distinguished Patriot wore a flat cloth cap: his coat was grievously old and worn: he had on list slippers, which caused him after dark to be mistaken for a ghost or a garrotter, according to taste or imagination. He was small of stature; his hair was white: he wore no beard or moustache, and his eyes were curiously soft and gentle. He looked as if he must have carried on his Patriotism in an upper chamber, among the ladies.

"Chevalier," said Mr. Cottle with a little natural pride at having a titled friend, "this is Mr. Laurence Waller, from Australia. Mr. Waller, this is the celebrated Patriot, the Chevalier Arminius de Heyn. He has given his name its English equivalent. Chevalier, present Mr. Waller with your card."

While Laurence wondered what might be the Hungarian form of its Anglicised equivalent De Heyn, the Chevalier politely lifted his limp old cap with one hand, and with the other felt in his breast pocket.

"My card, Sir," he said, producing a crumpled piece of folded paper. His voice was as gentle as his eyes. "I hope you will read it, Sir. I wish that we may meet again. I have no other place to meet my friends. To

those who choose to listen I have sometimes a great deal—oh!—a great deal to say. Au revoir, Sir." He again lifted his limp cap and passed on his way.

On the paper which he called his card was printed the following announcement: "Chevalier Arminius G. de Heyn. Knight of the Legion of St. Sauveur, and of San Martino. Honorary Member of the European Philotechnique for the Protection of the Unemployed and the Fatherless. Author of the 'Noble Plan,' as challenged by Lord Salisbury. Proscribed by the Austrian Government. Corresponding Member of the Scientific Societies of Ecuador, Honduras, and the Argentine Republic. Lecturer on the New Humanity. For terms apply to the Chevalier, care of Joseph Mayes, 183 Southwark Bridge Road."

The young Australian read this document and gasped.

"Are there any more great men on Bank Side?" he asked, presently recovering. "Let us get through with the great men before we go on."

"There are the children," Mr. Cottle replied, "my father's grandchildren. It is reasonable to hope that his glories will be revived by them. We live by the Past—my father's observation, Sir: we live in the Present —is it not beautifully true?—we live for the Future. And here come two of the children."

## CHAPTER III.

### OUT OF THE SUNSET.

THE sun was now on the point of sinking, and the Western splendour was at its best. On either side to North and South were rolling mists threatening to close together and so to spoil the show. But as yet they refrained and were themselves resplendent with borrowed glory. And then, out of the very heart of the sunset, as it seemed, there appeared, lightly floating on a golden cloud, a little boat. She might have been, for the glowing light around, for the deep red gold of which her frame seemed to be made, and for her pair of golden oars, the Royal gig belonging to Cleopatra's Barge, in which case the Thames would have been the Cydnus; or she might have been that very identical shell which once—Heaven knows how long ago!—was wafted over the seas at sunset—it is impossible at this distance of time to learn whence it came, who was its maker, or how it was propelled—to receive the Queen of Love and Beauty rising from the waters. Heavens! Was this only the turbid Thames? Were they only standing on Bank Side—shabby, mean, and common Bank Side?

As this charmed vessel drew nearer it lost something of its unearthly light and colour, and gained something in distinctness. Then one made out, distinctly, figures, which before were only spectral shapes of coloured light. They became well defined, yet wore a ghostlike air. As the boat floated down, they assumed

the appearance of two goddesses, or river nymphs at least, seated in the boat, bathed and wrapped and lapped in light and splendour. One of them had the sculls and the other sat in the stern. Laurence gazed upon this vision, wondering. When the boat drew near the Stairs, being still in the middle of the river outside rows of the barges, she who rowed turned her head. She had thrown off her hat, which lay in the bottom of the boat; the sunset painted her auburn hair the deepest red gold: it made a golden aureole round her head: it made her cheek glow and filled her eyes with a light that no painter would have dared to give them: and changed her dress, which was of some light soft stuff, such as girls love to wear in summer, into a splendid cloth of gold. Nay, this light, marvellous and magical, continued to lie around her and upon her, so that, when she landed and ran up the Stairs, she was still a river nymph or a Queen instead of a plain and simple girl, and he who looked upon her for the first time trembled. The ancients always trembled when they looked upon a nymph for the first time. Love might follow, but trembling came first.

In the days when Love and the Muses had only just been introduced to each other, and Love was still under the charm of those cold, yet graceful ladies, and exchanging his old rusticity for sweetness and poetry and politeness, the swains were happy in that they had these visions aforesaid of nymphs in the woods and on the river-banks and on the sea-shore. They sang, danced, struck the lute, bathed, played ball, and sometimes condescended to permit the shepherd to make love to them. In appearance they were chiefly distinguished

from mortal girls by the glowing light that lay upon their faces and lapped their shining limbs. And although, in the matter of love-making, they certainly did come down to the level of short-lived man, that glow never left their limbs nor did that light ever die out upon their faces. In like manner, in the time to follow, Laurence was always to see upon the head of this girl the golden aureole which crowned her when first he saw her in the boat, the sunset full upon her face.

Now while the boat was yet afar off, there came new footsteps along the walk, and Laurence turned impatiently. Another great man of Bank Side?

"You, Oliver?" asked Mr. Cottle. You were unexpected this evening. Your father has not yet gone within. Althea is out in her boat with Cassie. There are the girls"—he pointed to the boat and called the two figures of glory "the girls." "Mr. Waller, this is our friend, Mr. Oliver Luttrel, destined to illustrate the place where he once resided—for he has left Bank Side—by his discoveries in Science." Yes. Still another great man on Bank Side, Laurence perceived, and this time not elderly. "Oliver, this is my friend, if I may be permitted so to call him, Mr. Laurence Waller, from Australia, who honours us by becoming a temporary resident on the Bank."

Laurence saw before him a young man of his own age, but of slighter build and lesser stature. If he was as great a man as the others—surely Mr. Cottle ought to know so simple a thing—he was much better dressed, and in fact, he was groomed after the manner of the young man of Piccadilly, rather than him of the

Bank—if there were any young men on the Bank. He was remarkable in personal appearance: his face was pale, and his hair was a thick black mat: his eyes were black and quick: his features were by no means regular, his mouth being too wide, and his nose too broad: yet, taken together with his bright eyes and quick glance, they made a striking and interesting face.

He lifted his hat politely. But in his eyes and in his smile there was plainly to be read the question, "Who the Devil are you? And what in the world has brought you to Bank Side?" Laurence, reading this unspoken question, wisely refrained from giving any answer. But Oliver continued to look at him curiously and suspiciously. Who was this new friend of Mr. Cottle's? Why did he come to Bank Side? What did he want there? What right had Mr. Cottle to introduce the stranger to him?

When the boat touched the Stairs, Oliver called to the girls—or the goddesses—that he would carry up the things, and ran lightly down, and they all three laughed and talked as old friends and companions should. Then the girls—or the goddesses—mounted the wooden Stairs and Oliver followed them, having tied up the boat with a painter long enough to allow for the tide, carrying the sculls, the cushions, and the rudder. They all three crossed the road to the Private Residence of Mr. Cottle. The envy, hatred, jealousy, and malice which instantly filled the heart of the new comer was nothing more than the tribute due to the beauty of the girls. Any young man with a proper feeling towards the Sex would have experienced the same emotion. One records it solely in order to show that this young

man was endowed with a proper feeling towards the Sex.

Then the sun went down.

Instantly, a little of the splendour went out of the sky and the river: and as the mists rose and rolled together, the glory of the evening began slowly to depart; the colour and warmth and light to die away upon the river: the illuminations in the upper windows of St. Paul's to be extinguished: the marble Palaces to become commonplace warehouses. The magician of the Evening had done his task, and the City and the River and Bank Side itself were going to be left for the night to the hard and ugly truth. Perhaps for many evenings as well, for such a sunset is rare indeed. And the girls had gone indoors. And they were in the company of Mr. Oliver Luttrel. Oh! a great deal of splendour went out of sky and river when the boat touched the Stairs and the girls crossed the road and went indoors.

"I tell you, Clement"—it was one of the two elderly gentlemen still walking together—"something troubles the boy."

"Mr. Waller," said Mr. Lucius Cottle, "it is your first evening. Before you go to your own room let me present you to my family. We aim, Sir, in the words of my lamented Father, at Simplicity without Coarseness, at Refinement without Affectation, at Cheerfulness without Noise. Follow me, Sir."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ACADEMY.

On entering the room where all these fine things were to be found, Laurence was instantly and mysteriously seized with the sense of having been in the place before. Now, seeing that he was born in Sydney and that he had never until now been in London, this was clearly impossible. Nor had he ever seen a picture or photograph of the room. Yet he had seen it before. Everybody knows, and has felt, this vague sensation; it is by some accepted as a proof of previous existence, or of the transmigration of souls. The least thing causes it; neuralgia is not more unaccountable: an unexpected word, a song, the sight of a flower, anything may bring it on. It is uncomfortable because it cannot be explained; and it is as unsatisfying as spirit-rapping, because it never leads to anything more. I mean that if one could actually remember when, how, with whom, and under what circumstances, the thing partly remembered actually happened on the previous occasion, most interesting additions to historical knowledge might be expected. As for instance—the flower which I now hold in my hand was once—we will say, five hundred years ago—given me by a Houri in the Gardens of the Old Man of the Mountain, just half an hour before I jumped off the lofty Tower at his command and was swept up in fragments at the foot of it. How charming if one could recall the beauty of those gardens and the delights of those three days—all too short—spent

in that mediæval Syrian Rosherville—the only genuine earthly Paradise! But no: the memory refuses anything beyond the mere shred and rag of fact: it says, mysteriously, "This is not the first time," and says it with a snap—that and no more. In the case of this room, I believe that the sensation was caused by memory connecting what was before the eye with things read in books. For anyone who had read of interiors in the days of the Third George would at once perceive that here was a room which, in all but the mere perishable materials of carpet and curtain, preserved exactly the bourgeois parlour as it used to flourish under that benign sovereign. The windows were closed, though the evening was so bright and warm—windows in the days of the great George were always kept closed: there still lingered in the air—a survival of the Academy—a sense of scholarly tranquillity. The late Vicesimus Cottle himself might have been sitting in one of the two horsehair armchairs (where, indeed, he had sat every day for fifty years and more) discussing Moral Philosophy, selecting specimens, or manufacturing Maxims, for his "Practical Elocutionist." Perhaps the scholarly feeling was partly due to the presence of a large bookcase filled with books. They were not, as anybody could see at a glance, the mere flimsy productions of modern writers: in fact, most of the volumes on the shelves had attained their tenth lustrum and some had achieved their century. They were bound in leather, as all books ought to be—the fragrant Russia, the serviceable Calf, or the polite Morocco. They had formed the Library of the two great scholars, father and son, who had successively conducted the Academy.

Consequently they were chiefly classical works, English and the lighter literature being represented by Blair's "Sermons" and the "Pursuits of Literature." Since the decease of Mr. Vicesimus Cottle the books had remained altogether untouched. This is the strange, sad fate of books—such as escape the waste-paper man—at last to stand in rows upon the shelves, never more to be taken down, never more to be read, to do no longer good or harm, to be at last as much forgotten as their authors.

Everything in the room belonged to a Georgian, pre-æsthetic time. There was a sideboard highly polished, made of rose-wood, three drawers on top, a cupboard on either side; in the middle was the home of the coal-scuttle—not a coal-box—and this was of copper burnished like unto fine red gold. The chairs were of the ancient kind, heavy, of polished mahogany, with slippery horsehair seats: there was a black horsehair sofa: an ancient clock ticked in one corner. On the sideboard stood a punch-bowl—yea, the very bowl in which the first Cottle, Academician, had brewed for his friends and on festive occasions many a jorum of steaming punch. Within it lay, now inactive, its silver ladle. On either hand stood candlesticks, two of silver and two brazen: and between them, in its tray of brass, the snuffers still lay, as in old time, ready for daily use. The table was spread for supper—it was a supper of bread and cheese—the plates were of the old willow pattern, and the beer was drawn in a Brown George, which made one think of country taverns, knee-breeches, and powdered hair. The two windows were furnished, besides their white blinds, with that now forgotten form

of lower blind which only lingers in certain seaside places. One would expect to find it in the more ancient parts of Ramsgate, for instance. It consists of a frame set with green laths which may be turned in any direction by a kind of screw at the top. You can thus look out, yourself unseen, or you can shut out the view as you please. On the walls, which were wainscoted and painted drab, in panels, with a projecting dado, hung coloured prints in frames which had once been gilt: over the mantelshelf were samplers worked by feminine Cottles long since passed away; there were also certain works, once of the highest art, in wax, representing fruit and flowers; and in the middle hung one of those profile portraits common when the century was still young, executed with a pair of scissors in black paper, the hair, one eye, one ear (all that were visible), and the outline of the nostril indicated by fine touches of gold. The portrait represented an elderly gentleman, partially bald, with commanding features, a splendid lace shirt front, and a double chin: a person of great dignity. It was the portrait of the first historical Cottle. Somehow, in contemplating this portrait one felt as if no mere modern photograph could possibly convey a more lifelike understanding of the man. The fireplace was of the lofty kind, with a serviceable hob and an open chimney, and before it stood a high brass fender of like date. Nothing, in short, had been changed in the room for sixty years at least: not wholly from a conservative attachment to old things, but partly from a tightness always chronic in the family which forbade any expenditure except such as was necessary to prevent the soul from leaving the body and going forth

on independent travel. The owner of the house, precise and prim, with his set lips and big nose, might have belonged to the same period and might have sat, himself, for the profile portrait taken opposite Exeter Change. He looked, indeed, once this fancy possessed the mind, incomplete without the big lace shirt front. At one of the windows stood the two girls who had come straight down from heaven in an open boat and a cloud of glory. With them stood Oliver and another girl. Their voices, as they talked and laughed, were not out of keeping with the old fashion of the room. There were young people even when George the Third was king. Why should they not talk and laugh together? In the other window was a boy of sixteen, small for his age, and pale, who sat with his face in a book—not one from his grandfather's Library, but a novel—devouring, absorbed, not to be disturbed. A bookish boy of sixteen with a book in his hand is like a beast of prey over a carcase. Touch him—speak to him—disturb him—if you dare! Beside the empty fireplace, in one of the two horsehair armchairs, sat bolt upright, her hands crossed, an elderly lady dressed in black stuff with a widow's cap. She was so exactly like Mr. Cottle with her prim attitude, her slight figure, large head, thin lips, and goodly nose, that she was clearly his sister.

"Cornelia," said Lucius, "let me present to you our lodger, Mr. Laurence Waller. This, Mr. Waller, is my sister, Cornelia Sorby—a widow." Then he whispered, behind his hand, "In the Church."

Laurence bowed. Bank Side grew continually more

wonderful. In the Church! Was she, perhaps, the widow of a Dean, or an Archdeacon?

"I trust, young gentleman," said the lady, severely, "that your manners are orderly and that your hours are early. You are placed, remember, in the Best Bedroom."

"We hesitated long," her brother explained, "before we put up the card in the window. We are a quiet household. Therefore we are afraid of introducing strangers to the house. We do not like things to be broken. The abuse of Hospitality, in the words of my father, is condemned even by the barbarian. The card was put up five years ago, after the death of Mr. Polter, Q.C."—he sighed heavily—"but there are few passers-by in Bank Side, and no one has ever applied for the apartment except you. Therefore, we are naturally anxious."

"You will find me both early and quiet."

"Why," Cornelia looked up sharply, "I know that voice—surely—and I remember that face. Whose voice is it, Brother?"

"I do not know, Sister. Mr. Waller, we have another sister, Claudia—also widowed. This is her son Felix—Felix Laverock." Laurence had not seen the young fellow who now shyly advanced from a dark corner and shook hands with him—a large-limbed lad of six feet two in height and twenty-one years of age. "My nephew—Felix—on a Wharf. My other sister, Claudia, is not, herself, in the Church. Yet she prophesies." At this remarkable statement Felix Laverock blushed crimson and hung his head. "We had a third sister," Lucius continued, "the eldest of the family, the

unfortunate Julia. She married Mr. Norbery, of whom you may have heard."

He spoke as if his sisters were known to all the world by their Christian names.

"And these," he continued, "are my children. Cassandra"—he indicated the girl who had been sitting in the stern of the boat—"is my eldest. Cassandra exercises the responsible duty of receiving the visitors at a photographer's in Cheapside. Flavia, my second, is in the Telegraph Department. My son, Sempronius, is still at the City of London School. We belonged to a family of scholars, Mr. Waller, and, though the Academy is closed for this generation at least, we keep up the connection by names taken from Classic sources. This young lady"—he indicated the other goddess of the sunset—"it would give me the greatest happiness to claim for a daughter. But I cannot. She is the daughter of Mr. Clement Indagine, whom you saw upon the Bank. Althea—permit me—Mr. Laurence Waller."

The room was still full of the glowing light of the sunset, though now it was passing quickly into twilight. It seemed to the young man as if the girls had brought the glow with them from the west and that it still clung to their figures. Certainly there was sunshine in the face of Althea which seemed to lie there as if it were at home and meant to stay. "If," thought the young man, "there are in Bank Side many such girls as this, it is an unknown country which deserves to be explored."

The girl was of generous height and fair proportions, her figure rounded, her hands rather large—it would be a great artistic mistake if Nature, who, how-

ever, never makes such mistakes, and never frames her real models with any false proportions, were to give tiny hands to large, as well as to little, women: her comely head, which reached the height of five feet seven, was crowned with light brown hair which curled about her head wherever the wind had blown it out: her ample cheek had the warm glow of health as well as the bloom of youth. Her blue eyes were soft and somewhat heavy, but not altogether of the pensive kind. She laughed as one who rejoiceth in her youth and beauty.

"Mr. Cottle," she said, "if you are not satisfied with Cassandra and Flavia, you are a very wicked and discontented man."

"With all three," Mr. Cottle replied, with the old-fashioned bow of one who pays a compliment, "I should have been truly happy. With less than all, there is a void."

She laughed again, put on her hat, nodded to everybody, and ran away. Oliver went with her, or after her. And Laurence observed that, at the departure of Mr. Oliver Luttrel, the other young man, Felix Laverock, assumed instantly a more cheerful air; that Cassandra, for her part, looked depressed; and that Flavia breathed a short sigh of satisfaction. The symptoms were not lost upon him. Also the show of *camaraderie* with which Oliver went off with the girl caused him a second pang, more severe than the first, of envy, hatred, and malice.

The two daughters of the house belonged to that very large class of London girls—the little woman. They were little in stature, and their shoulders were narrow:

their features were little: their hands were very little. But Cassandra, the elder, was pretty as well as little. She was pretty, so to speak, all over: in the shape of her head, in the outline of her face, in her slight figure, in the curve of her chin, in the contour of her ear, and in her little well-shaped hands. She was extremely pretty. Her hair was of the commonest brown colour, but it suited her face and her comely head: her eyes were not particularly fine or unusual, but they were merry eyes: and her lips were laughing lips. Flavia, on the other hand, was also small but not in the least pretty. As is often observed in families, the sisters closely resembled each other, and yet one was pretty and one was plain. Flavia, like her father, was prim. She showed this quality, as he did, by her dress, which was neat and correct, and, as he did, by her manner and her speech. She also inherited a nose of more than usual magnitude.

"You have now seen our family," said Mr. Cottle. "We shall be glad of your company, for conversation, any evening before supper."

He looked as if the Reception was concluded. In Australia, one would have been invited to supper as a matter of course. But the custom of hospitality, in the days of George the Third, was not prevalent in the rank and station to which the Cottles belonged. Besides—which must be considered—where there is a necessity of small economies carried on to the third generation, one does not hastily ask people to eat and drink things which cost money.

"Thank you," said Laurence. "With your permis-

sion I will go to my own room. You do not object to the smell of tobacco, I hope."

There was a dead silence. Sempronius raised his book to hide his face. His sisters turned their heads. The widow tossed hers impatiently.

"Permit me, Sister," said the Head of the Family, lifting his hand. "Our father, Vicesimus Cottle, would never during the whole of his life suffer the Sanctity of the Academy—he called it the Sanctity—to be profaned by the presence of tobacco. The habit of snuffing he deplored, but, he said, it was the vice of gentlemen: that of smoking he considered the vice of coal-heavers. During a hundred years this house has never known the smell of the weed except once"—he looked impressively at his son—"once, I say, when a thoughtless boy introduced a cigarette. Before we placed the card in the window——"

"Five years ago," said Cornelia. "After the death of Mr. Polter, Q.C."

"Oh! if you object to smoking——" Laurence interposed.

Mr. Cottle again motioned with his hand, "——we then discussed the subject in all its bearings. We agreed that if we received a lodger eligible in all other respects we would, if necessary, waive any further objections, within certain limits. It is now true that most young men take tobacco in some form. You may therefore smoke in your own room, Mr. Waller. We do not forget, also, that the Academy has now been closed for many years. Perhaps, if I may suggest, a seat near the open window—and—and—perhaps you will not be an-

noyed if we cough should the fumes pass through the doors of the chambers."

Laurence laughed and retreated.

"I remember his face and his voice," Cornelia repeated.

"I like his face and I like his voice," said Cassandra. "And I hope we shall see a great deal of him."

"I dreamed of bees last night," Cornelia said thoughtfully. "That may mean profit. Then I dreamed of caterpillars, and that means change."

"He looks as if he will make a dreadful litter, and break things," said Flavia. "Father, shall we put away the punch-bowl for fear?"

"I hope we have done wisely," Mr. Cottle replied. "He looks quiet, but, after all, he is a strange young man. And from Australia. One never knows. He may turn out to be a Drinking Digger. He may break quantities of things."

"And we have given him the Best Bedroom," said Cornelia, shivering.

"He cannot, my dear Sister, break the Best Bed. And after all he may be quiet. Let us hope that he is quiet. They told me in Lincoln's Inn Fields that he belongs to a most respectable family. I do hope that he will not break things. Yes, Flavia, carry the punch-bowl to your own room. It is well to take precautions. He may brandish a cane. I do not think he can harm the candlesticks. And to-morrow I will lend him the 'Elocutionist.' We must remember, Sister, that he pays us thirty shillings a week: and at the present moment," he sighed heavily, "there is little doing. I should not be surprised if the screw—I mean—the Guarantee were

lowered once more. One of the gentlemen in Chambers talks of going to Bombay, and another writes—actually writes—for the daily papers. Tries to carry it off with a laugh. But it is a poor pretence. It was not always thus with the Higher Branch. Not in such a spirit, Sempronius—remember—did Lord Eldon rise."

## CHAPTER V.

### THE BEST BEDROOM.

THE lodger was placed, as he had been warned, in the Best Bedroom. Formerly, no family which respected itself was without a Best Bedroom. It was the National recognition of the Duty of Hospitality. But just as the tobacconist used to show outward respect for the Sunday by the single shutter, yet during that day carried on a roaring trade, so the establishment of the Best Bed acknowledged a virtue which was never practised. For no one ever occupied the Best Bedroom. Honest bourgeois folk, when, which was rarely, they did have a guest, put him in an inferior apartment. For a hundred years, ever since the opening of the Academy by the first Cottle, had this room been kept in readiness for the guest who was never expected and was never asked. It seems remarkable. Some customs linger in decay: this continued in its pristine vigour. One might have thought that a lumber room, an unused garret, even a cupboard, might have been set apart and labelled "Best Bedroom," in deference to ancestral custom: anything would do for the phantom guest. But no: the Law

was plain: it must be carried out to the letter: and so the family were squeezed and packed together in obedience to the rule which demanded a Best Bedroom.

A vast four-poster with mahogany columns, a canopy with faded velvet fringe and heavy red curtains looped up, stood in the middle of the room. Lying in such a bed the sleeper might dream of Royal funerals and fancy himself lying in State. This conceit would naturally conduct his thoughts into a profitable field of meditation as edifying to the soul as Young's "Night Thoughts."

The rest of the room seemed only regarded as a case or big box for the holding of the Four Poster. There was a chest of drawers in mahogany; there were two chairs also of mahogany; a washing-stand; and on the walls hung two or three prints of an allegorical kind, such as "Ignorance put to Flight by Resolution," and "Perseverance directed by Knowledge," suggesting the severely moral atmosphere of an Academy. Laurence, in his ignorance, thought that this must have been formerly the bedroom of the late Vicesimus, and wondered how that reverend ghost would take the smell of tobacco. He was wrong: it had always been the Best Bedroom, and no one for a hundred years had ever slept in it. Between the colossal Bed and the window had been placed (by the fair hands of Flavia) a small table with a cover—only a flimsy modern thing with a common deal top, put there for the convenience of the lodger, who perhaps might wish to write letters. A pair of candles stood upon this table.

Laurence opened the window and looked out. The sunset glory had departed, and a tranquil twilight

reigned. But the river was dark: there were no lights upon it or any movement: Bank Side itself, though it was not yet ten o'clock, was deserted. There came no sound of voices from the "Watermen's Arms" close by. To outward view, a secluded spot and quiet. But cabs and carts rolled over Southwark Bridge; and engines whistled and trains rumbled continuously from the railway station beyond. Many places there are in London which have a secluded look and the appearance of a solemn calm. Bank Side on a summer evening is one. Or there is the Cathedral Close of Horselydown: or the Crescent, Minories: or the Garden Churchyard of St. Georges, Ratcliff. They are quiet and undisturbed, but around them and outside them rolls the noisy River of Life which is never still.

Laurence lit the candles, sat down, and began the desecration of the Academy by the smoke of tobacco.

Presently he opened his pocket-book and drew out a letter.

"Now, my dear mother," he said, "we will read your letter again on the spot. It will be much more intelligible. Meantime, I have done already more than you desired. I am actually lodging with the people. My cousins, Lucius and Cornelia, little think that they are entertaining an angel."

"My dearest Son," the letter began. "When you have seen the sights of London and been to all the gay places and are able to spare a little time, I wish you to find out for me what has become of certain people who at one time had a great deal to do with my life. Perhaps they are all dead; perhaps they are

dispersed and lost sight of: but perhaps you will find some of them.

"Go, first of all, to a place on the south side of the river, called Bank Side. It is a poor and shabby place" —("Not at sunset, mother")—"on the river side, with factories, works, and wharves. There are, however, two or three private houses, and one of them on the west side of Southwark Bridge used to be the residence of my uncle Vicesimus Cottle, who kept a school there. I do not suppose that he is still living, because I speak of a time thirty years ago, but the house was his own, and perhaps some of his children live there still. He had one son, Lucius, and three daughters named Julia, Cornelia and Claudia——"

"Claudia, my dear mother," said the reader, laying down the letter, "is now in the Church. She is the widow of an Archdeacon or even a Bishop—she certainly wears an apron: Claudia is a Prophet: and Julia is the unfortunate Julia, now no more. Lucius is now in the Higher Branch of the Law—that is, a Barrister. Perhaps a Queen's Counsel, though why a Barrister should live at Bank Side—— However——"

"The eldest of my cousins was married to a certain Mr. Norbery, about whom I have to tell you a great deal. He was twenty years older than his wife. Of the three cousins Julia was my friend. The others regarded me with the affection that is generally bestowed upon poor relations, but Julia was really kind to me. Therefore, it was a great grief to me when she caught some kind of bad throat and died.

"My sister and I were the poor relations; though indeed there was not much wealth in the family. We

were so poor that we had to leave school and go to work at a very early age. My sister was employed in a City shop where she made trimmings, and I presently became a daily dressmaker. That means that for a shilling a day and dinner and tea I went out to people's houses and sewed for them. In some houses they were kind to me, I remember: but in many they tried to get as much work as they could for the smallest amount of food."

"Mankind," said the reader, out of his vast experience, "are made up of beasts and humans. Mostly beasts."

"Presently my sister heard of a good place in the country and went away. We wrote to each other for a year, and then my letters came back. And then I went away too, and so we quite lost sight of each other. And I know not what has become of my poor dear Florry, who was once so pretty and so bright. It is a hard thing, my son, to be a poor girl in England. My uncle, upon whom I called regularly on the first Sunday of every month, received me with stately condescension: my two cousins with the kind of warmth which comes from a sense of duty. How strange it is that, even now, with all our wealth and success—when I have my carriages and great houses and the people call me 'my Lady,' and we are far, far grander people than my cousins ever dreamed about—I still think of them as occupying a position so much higher in the world than my own. Tell me if their house on Bank Side proves overwhelming to you." The reader looked about him and smiled. "To me the house represented the highest possible gentility, and no one certainly

could have had more dignity than my uncle Vicesimus.

"Soon after Julia died Mr. Norbery greatly astonished me by asking if I would become his housekeeper. He said that I was no stranger to him: that I knew the ways of the house, and that he knew me for a careful girl and one who would not waste and lavish. He offered me sixteen pounds a year, with board and lodging. His offer seemed to open a door of release from my precarious way of living, and I willingly accepted it. For some unknown reason Cornelia and Claudia chose to be offended. They made me feel that they resented my taking their sister's place, though only as housekeeper: and they said so many unkind things that I left off going to the house and afterwards saw nothing more of my cousins.

"Now, my son, please read carefully what follows, though it will not at first interest you. When you have read it you will understand what I want you to do, and why.

"I knew very well, when I accepted Mr. Norbery's proposal, what he meant by his ways. It was no secret that his ways were niggardly. I knew that he was parsimonious in the highest degree. He would dole out the tea, weigh the bread and the meat, do the marketing: put the house on allowance of everything—all this I knew very well—but at the worst he could not keep up a more thrifty way of life than I had been compelled to follow. Besides, I knew him to be a man who would not treat me with personal unkindness. Therefore, I accepted his offer and became his housekeeper.

"My employer lived at a house in Southwark Bridge Road—I forget the number—but it was one of a row on the east side near Anchor Terrace. It was dingy, because the owner could never make up his mind to spend money in painting it. Within, the furniture was continually being changed, because he was always buying things and selling them at a profit. One day we would be sitting in the midst of the most beautiful and precious carved cabinets, tables, and chairs, and the next upon common chairs taken out of the kitchen with a deal table. And sometimes the walls would be hung with paintings, and at other times they would be quite bare.

"There never was any man so friendless as Mr. Norbery. He had no friends: he seemed to have no acquaintances: he only knew other men by doing business with them. No one ever came to the house: he went nowhere. Some men go to taverns in the evening, for company. But Mr. Norbery sat at home every night, alone. He courted no society. Once I asked him if he had no relations. He hesitated awhile and then replied that he had none. Afterwards, however, I discovered that this was not true. He had relations, as you shall learn.

"He was a money-lender, to begin with. That is to say, money-lending was his principal business. His house in the Southwark Bridge Road was, I suppose, a good central spot for such business. His clients were not young gentlemen of profligate habits, such as one reads of in novels, but the tradesmen of the Quarter. He knew them all and their private affairs: he knew what mortgages were on their houses or their stocks:

what money they had borrowed, and who were behind them: if any of them gave a bill of sale he found it out: if one of them took to drink: if one began to haunt the tavern and the billiard room: if one began to bet upon races or to follow any kind of sport: if one had an extravagant wife, or a worthless son: if the business of one was falling off: if one was a fool and certain to cause his business to decay: he learned it, and traded to his own advantage on the knowledge.

"He was not only a money-lender: he was always attending sales and auctions and buying things which he sold again: he was always looking out for people who had things of whose value they were ignorant—pictures, furniture, china, plate, mirrors, books, anything. When he found such things he knew no rest until he had bought them—of course for a tenth part of their value. He had an agent, clerk, or servant, named Joseph Mayes, who was his jackal, and found out this and all other kinds of information for him—I think he got it from pot-boys, bailiffs, men in possession, marine-store dealers, and so forth, gathering it in the public-houses. He was a fellow of a jovial appearance, though as cold-hearted in reality as his master.

"In short, as I now understand, Mr. Norbery's whole business was to make money out of the necessities, weakness, folly, and wickedness of his fellow-men. It is not an honourable business, though men become rich by means of it. And, in the pursuit of that business, he knew no tenderness, sympathy, or compassion whatever. He exacted his bond.

"His habits of life were uniform. In the morning

he went out upon his affairs, and generally remained out until one o'clock. After dinner he sat in his office, which was the front room, until half-past eight in the evening, receiving his clients and transacting business with them. Hither came the unhappy man who hoped by the help of a loan to get clear of his difficulties: hither came the same man, later on, when he had discovered that he had tied a millstone about his neck. There was the widow who had borrowed money to pay her rent, and given a bill of sale upon her furniture for security: the tradesman who had mortgaged his stock: the clerk who wanted to renew his bill: the spendthrift who wanted to give a bill in exchange for money down—they all came. At the opening of business nobody could be more friendly than Mr. Norbery: the thing was very simple: it could be arranged in ten minutes: terms of repayment would be easy. Later on, he became harder: he would explain quite clearly what would happen if the agreement was not carried out. I, who sat in the room behind at my work, could hear the poor creatures weeping and praying for time, or else, as sometimes happened, cursing the man who had made them sign that bond. Neither prayers nor curses moved him any more than they would have moved the rising tide.

"After supper he had a pipe and a glass of brandy-and-water—his only extravagance—and sometimes he talked: always of his affairs and his wonderful cleverness in getting the better of somebody or other. I understand now, that in these conversations he tried to represent himself as he wished people to regard him, and to think of him as a perfectly just man who wanted

no more than the agreement entitled him to demand. I also understand, now, that he was always scheming and contriving to overreach and get the better of his neighbours.

"There was one part of his property—in fact, the most important part—of which he was continually telling me. First he would tell me how he acquired it, and this with so roundabout a story that it was easy to perceive that he was concealing some portions of his history and altering other portions. Evidently it was a story which might be told from another point of view. I also gathered that, in fact, it had been very differently told. It was property which should have belonged to a certain Sylvester Indagine——"

The reader here laid down the letter, the name naturally causing his thoughts to wander to the girl who came out of the boat. Then he remembered a certain fellow-traveller. "The Professor's name was Sylvester——" he said.

"—— Sylvester Indagine, but Mr. Norbery persuaded him into selling it. He owned that he persuaded him: but then, he explained, Sylvester Indagine was such a poor weak creature that somebody else would have persuaded him. He knew this, he admitted—that the property was bound to go up in value: the unfortunate owner did not know this. What then? He might have known: it was a matter of business: in business one buys and sells and makes profit by getting knowledge. Then, he had given a good price for the property—a much better price than some men would have offered. If Sylvester afterwards died in the Queen's Bench Prison, what had that sale to do

with his death? And one evening he said a new thing. 'As to what they said about my sister,' he said, 'that is rubbish. She was dead, and he owed me money. He owed me money.' I did not then understand the words, but I remembered them—so that, as I said before, I found out that he had had relations. And this, I am certain, none of my cousins, not even his wife, ever knew.

"Another evening he told me that Sylvester Indagine's son was likely to go off in the same way as his father.

"'There are two boys,' he said: 'Clement and Æneas. I don't know at this moment where Clement is. Æneas is in a solicitor's office. And I am afraid he has taken to billiards and drink—yes—to billiards and drink like his father.'

"On several occasions he returned to this subject, so as to show that he was watching this young man with interest. And I learned little by little that there was a small property coming to the sons of Sylvester Indagine, and that he hoped to get that property for himself. I confess that I felt a great pity for these young men, round whose feet I could see the snares were spread. But I never saw either of them.

"Now, one night, just before closing time, there was a loud and angry conversation in the office. Sitting in the back parlour with only a glass door of separation, I heard all that was said.

"'What?' cried the speaker, 'you thought to do for the son what you had already done for the father. You would persuade them into parting with the little property that is coming to them. You expected Æneas

this very evening, and you have got the papers ready for him to sign. Well—he will not come.'

"'If he will not sell, Dr. Luttrel, how will he get out of his difficulties? I shall not give him any money.'

"'He has already got out of them. I am come to tell you that he has gone away.'

"'Oh! you have advised him to run away, have you, Sir? To run away!'

"'At all events, he has run away. He knows now how you have bought up his debts, and why. And he has gone away out of your reach.'

"Mr. Norbery said nothing.

"'You!' The speaker was a certain Dr. Luttrel, who had recently settled to practise in the place. He was a young man and said to be clever. 'You!'—I could feel that he was pointing his finger at Mr. Norbery—'you—to whom he should have looked for help and advice—have done your best to compass his destruction for the sake of a miserable house or two! The very stones are calling out upon you.'

"'I do not hear the voice of those stones. Say what you have to say, and go.'

"'You sent your own sister's husband—Æneas Indagine's father—to die in a Debtors' Prison—and now you are trying to rob your sister's sons!'

"He said more, but this was enough. Mr. Norbery, then, had relations. He had nephews. They were Clement and Æneas, the two sons of Sylvester Indagine, the man who had died in the Queen's Bench Prison, whose property he had acquired. And he was scheming to get from them whatever they had. There was never a harder-hearted man."

"Dr. Luttrel"—said the reader. "That was the man I saw to-night. And Clement Indagine was with him. Very well. If the old man is dead, it hardly looks as if he had left his wealth to his nephew." He went on reading the letter.

"I was by this time engaged to your father: he was a boat-builder at Rotherhithe. I had not ventured to tell Mr. Norbery, because I was afraid. I knew he wanted me to stay with him, and that he would be very angry. But my lover grew impatient and I had to tell him. First of all he fell into a great rage, and declared I was behaving with the grossest ingratitude. Next he fell to cajoling me, and after all sorts of flattering words he offered to double the wages if I would stay on with him. Lastly, he even offered to marry me. 'There!' he said, 'I will make you the richest woman in the Borough, and I hope that will satisfy you.' He seemed amazed that any woman should refuse such an offer. When he understood that nothing could bribe me to give up my sweetheart, he became quite calm, and said in his driest manner—I remember the words as if it was yesterday—'Then, cousin Lucy'—he always called me cousin—'you leave my house in an hour. And now, listen. Six months ago I made my will. I must leave my money to someone, and I left it to you —all of it'—he groaned dismally—'the whole of it; all my beautiful houses and shops and my shares and investments. Backler the lawyer drew the will: Mayes witnessed it: and it is kept in my box at Backler's. Very good. Now I shan't alter that will. I won't leave a sixpence to—to the sons of Sylvester Indagine, and I won't leave a sixpence to Julia's relations. But I will

punish you another way. I am going to live for thirty years yet—why not for forty? You shall spend all those years in poverty: your husband shall be a bankrupt: you shall be ruined: and I will not help you. Not until you are an old woman, and have passed your life in misery, will you succeed to your fortune. Meantime, no one will know that it is to be yours, and you will not be able to raise a penny on your expectations. Your husband, I say, shall be a pauper and your children beggars. Now, you can go.'

"An hour afterwards I left the house, taking my things with me, and I have never seen him since.

"But his words were partly prophetic, because in two or three months after our wedding my husband was made a bankrupt. I do not understand exactly how the thing was managed, but it was Mr. Norbery who did it by means of some mortgage that he had acquired. The mortgage was of long standing and troubled my husband no more than if it had been rent; but the value of the Yard had gone down, so that when the mortgage was foreclosed it was not possible to raise another to pay it off with.

"At first it really seemed as if the rest of his words were to come true, because my husband found it difficult to get work, to say nothing of recovering his position. At last we resolved upon trying a new country where Mr. Norbery could no longer pursue us, and in a happy day we came here.

"I am quite certain, my dear boy, that he spoke the truth: I mean, that he really had made that Will and that he was resolved not to make another.

"Go then: find out, first, if he still lives. If he

does, tell him who you are, and say, for me, that I do not want any of his fortune, however great it may be, but that it belongs to his nephews, to whom he ought to leave it. If, on the other hand, he is dead, which is more than likely, ascertain what has been done about that will, and put the matter into proper hands so that the property may be restored to his two nephews or their children.

"As regards my cousins, I do not know whether they will receive you in a friendly spirit. But make their acquaintance, unless they are scattered and have left their old house on Bank Side. It may be, perhaps, that some of them are poor and want assistance. Let us help them for the sake of Julia, who was always my very loving friend and cousin.

"As for my sister Florry, I know not where you can look for or how you may find her, or if she still lives. Perhaps, if anyone can tell you about her, it would be Cornelia. Be happy, my dear son, and come back soon to your loving mother,

"LUCY WALLER."

No one, in the old days, was supposed to require more than an inch and a half of candle in his bedroom. It was on this limited scale that Flavia had furnished the lodger's candlesticks. Therefore, at this point, just as the letter was finished, both candles began simultaneously to flicker in their sockets. Laurence extinguished them and sat awhile pondering, in the twilight.

"Things," he said, "coincide in a truly wonderful fashion. I am haunted by Indagines. The Professor

was on board the steamer—his Christian name was Sylvester, too. He was coming to England in order to remedy a great wrong, he told me. What great wrong? Did the ghost of the first Sylvester lug off to a debtors' prison the ghost of old Norbery, and is he kept there still? And on my very first night on Bank Side I meet Clement Indagine himself—what relation can he be to the Professor, I wonder? And he is a poet—I have heard of Swinburne and Browning and Locker and Dobson, but I never heard of Indagine. Perhaps he is Swinburne in disguise. Can any wrong have been done to Althea? . . . Althea——" he repeated the name softly. "She came out of the sunset. She descended from heaven. Is she the one who is wronged? In that case I should like to take my coat off. And is the Property big, or was it big only in my mother's imagination? Perhaps it consists of half a dozen houses in a Bank Side slum. Hang it! I hope Althea will get it all. She should buy a velvet dress—she would look splendid in crimson velvet. Althea — the beautiful Althea. She came straight out of the clouds—with an attendant Nymph." Here he yawned, being sleeply. "I am in the house of my ancestors. Vicesimus—wonder why my mother never told me about the 'Practical Elocutionist'—was my great uncle: my grandmother was a Cottle: the original Academician was my great-grandfather. Lucius—of the Higher Branch—is my cousin: Cornelia—in the Church—how the Devil can she be in the Church?—is also my cousin. So is Claudia, who is a Prophet—a Minor Prophet: it would be presumptuous to expect higher rank: and pretty *little Cassandra* and Flavia the Prim and Sempronius

and Felix—they are all—all—all—my cousins. I have got an armful of cousins."

He looked out of the window again. The broad river flowed, black and silent, at his feet: beyond the river the great Cathedral loomed, high above the warehouses, vast and majestic, solemn in the dim twilight. Across the waters came the boom of the bell striking a half-hour. Then this young man's heart was filled with a strange emotion. He forgot, for the first time in his life, the Sydney home: he forgot the Australian thoughts: his mind went back to the old time, thirty years ago, before ever he was born, when his mother went from house to house earning a shilling a day and her humble food—his mother, now so sweet and gracious a lady—and meekly called once a month at the house of her genteel relations to receive the condescension of the learned Vicesimus and the chilly kindness of Cornelia: and tramped about the mean streets of Southwark with her sister, as poor as herself—the sister who made trimmings in a shop and took a country situation and disappeared. What became of that sister? Whither had she voyaged? Why did she leave off writing? Where was she now?

He now understood for the first time—he had read the letter a dozen times on his voyage home, but with little comprehension—his mother's old life. As he had stood that night to watch the sunset upon the river, so might she have stood a hundred times—with her sisters —with Florry, lost and vanished. Behind her the respectability of the Academy: before her the river and the great Cathedral beyond: her present, a life, hard,

ill-paid, uncertain: and for her future nothing but the hope that always lives and mostly dies with youth.

He was among his own people, unknown to them, perhaps bringing gifts from foreign lands. Among his own people. One cannot choose cousins: they are served out: one is helped to cousins: it is good manners to receive without a murmur whatever cousins are helped. These were, at least, interesting, though not wealthy, cousins. And they were his own people. To a Colonial this may mean more than to a home-born Englishman.

While he sat pondering these things, the clock struck twelve: slowly, every stroke of the bell ringing and circling in the air. It was midnight: even the railway station was quiet at last: the night was very still and calm. And then Laurence saw things ghostly. He clearly saw, standing at the river side, the figures of two poor girls catching each other by the hand. He could see them quite plainly, and he could hear them talking; and one was saying, "Florry, we are alone in the world—let us never lose each other." The voice came up to him with the dying echoes of the bell. It was the voice of his mother.

As he stretched his legs between the sheets he heard a little stifled cough which made him sit up and look round, for it seemed to come from the bottom of the bed.

"That's Vicesimus," he murmured. "I thought he wouldn't stand it. The Sanctity of the Academy is profaned at last."

## CHAPTER VI.

### SUCCESSOR TO S. NORBERY.

THE name of Joseph Mayes may be read upon a zinc plate on the doorpost of No. 483 Southwark Bridge Road. The plate is of zinc because those of brass are often stolen and may be sold, whereas he who steals a zinc plate finds himself in possession of a property which he cannot sell. He might as well steal Honduras Stock. The house, a narrow three-cornered structure, has been of a deplorable dinginess for a long time. The door, however, stands hospitably open all day without even a Saturday half-holiday. In the window is a large printed bill announcing to the world that Joseph Mayes, Successor to S. Norbery, can be consulted from ten in the morning until nine in the evening. Many of his clients, in fact, prefer calling upon him under cover of the night. The bill also informs the passer-by that this useful and accomplished person undertakes many and varied offices. He will advance you, he says, on your own personal security, without fees, promptly, with secrecy, and on most moderate terms, from 5*l.* to 5000*l.*; he will attend auctions for you: he will value your furniture, library, pictures, and plate: he will negotiate the sale and transfer of your stock, goodwill, and connection: he will receive your rents, dividends, and interest: he will collect your rents: he will estimate your dilapidations: he will make you an inventory of goods: he will sell or let your house; he will find you a partner: or he will act as your General Agent.

On the morning after his arrival Laurence sallied forth with the vague idea of looking about him: one always learns something by looking about. He found himself in the Southwark Bridge Road, and as he strolled along looking about him with the interest belonging to a new place, his eye fell upon this bill in the window and he stopped to read it. "Successor to S. Norbery." Then Mr. Norbery had retired from business or had been called aloft. "Joseph Mayes." It was the name of Mr. Norbery's jackal. Well, if he wanted any information about Mr. Norbery, he would probably get it here. He hesitated, read the bill again carefully, and then knocked at the door inscribed "Office."

The room was furnished with a high railed desk, such as one sees provided for cashiers in shops. Behind the desk, in the corner, stood a safe, and beside it was a large table. Two chairs were placed in front of the table ready for clients, and one behind it in readiness for Mr. Mayes himself, but at this moment it was occupied by his clerk. A bundle of papers lay on the table before him, and he was apparently reading them and making notes of each. He looked up as Laurence entered. It was none other than the distinguished Hungarian patriot. Laurence felt ashamed of the old country, which could suffer so great a man to become clerk to a money-lender. Australia, he thought, would have given him something better. The Chevalier, however, made no sign of recognition, but went on with his work.

At the desk stood a man, pen in hand, over a great volume of accounts. By the way in which his finger

assisted his eye; by his method of holding the pen; by the sprawling big handwriting; and by the ill-shaped figures, was clearly betrayed the lack of education. That he belonged to the baser sort was also proclaimed aloud by his appearance, his voice, and his manners. He was now advanced in years: his white hair made a simple coronet or glory round his red bald head: his face was red and his cheeks full: he was fat: he looked the kind of man who feels really happy only when he sits in a bar-parlour with a glass of something hot, and a few congenial companions: one of those who laugh like ten men over the choice quips and delicate stories and deftly turned epigrams with which the evening would be enlivened: one who would be popular with these tavern friends: and whose popularity would be in no way lessened by the knowledge that he spent his business hours in overreaching his clients, besting his friends, grinding the noses of the poor, and exacting the letter of his bond. For to these thinkers, of such are the truly admirable among business men.

Mr. Mayes laid his broad forefinger on the book to mark the place.

"Well, Sir," he said, "what may be your business?"

"May I have a few words with you?"

"On business? Certainly. On private business, I presume. Certainly. Principals only dealt with. Chevalier, get out." The patriot rose meekly and retired through a glass door to an inner room, carrying with him his papers. "Chevalier"—Mr. Mayes ran after him—"go round to the Bank and get my book. Buy a shilling's worth of postage-stamps. And, on your way, call at the butcher's and get two chops—pick out

the biggest and the leanest. And four pounds of potatoes—I won't give more than three farthings a pound. You can have the cold pork for dinner. Look sharp about it. Now, Sir." Mr. Mayes closed the door and took his own armchair, assuming a paternal and benignant softness of voice, with a sympathetic smile, while he stuck his thumbs in his waistcoat armholes and stretched out his legs. This is an attitude which invites confidence. "Now, young gentleman, if you are in trouble and your creditors are pressing you: or if you've got to square somebody—young men will be foolish: I've been young myself—and perhaps foolish" —he smiled very sweetly and broadly—"or if you want to raise money on reversionary interests, furniture, or note of hand: or if you've got anything to sell—this is the right shop. Speak out.—Don't be afraid. My clerk is gone, and there is no one to listen. I have been called the Young Man's Best Friend."

"I do not want to borrow money at all," said Laurence, abashed at his own solvency.

"Oh!" Mr. Mayes showed a certain amount of disappointment. Not much, but perceptibly some. The smile in his eyes and on his lips slowly faded away. He was no longer one who knew and could sympathise with the follies of youth: he was again the man of business.

"I fear I shall only waste your time."

"Not much of it, you won't." Mr. Mayes rose, leaving the chair of benevolence, and assumed an attitude of mastery, standing with his back to the fire and his hands in his pockets. "Not much, young man.

Therefore, so as to waste as little as possible, go on quick!"

"You are, I believe, the successor of Mr. Norbery?"

"I am. Formerly his confidential—ahem—partner."

"Can you give me his present address?"

"His present address?—Why—Ho! Ho!" he laughed aloud. "It's a permanent address. You can't miss him. He's occupied the same quarters for five years. It's—Ho! Ho! Ho!—it's Nunhead Cemetery."

"Mr. Norbery is dead then?"

"Dead as a doornail. Young gentleman, if you didn't know that Mr. Norbery is dead, where have you been for the last five years? If your hair was shorter I should think you'd been enjoying a spell at one of the Queen's Hotels."

"Mr. Norbery is dead, is he? Excuse my ignorance. I have just come from Australia."

"Oh! From Australia. Well—the papers were full of it. But I suppose you've got no papers in Australia. What might you be wanting of Mr. Norbery now?"

"I believe that Mr. Norbery left a little Property behind him."

"A little? Ho! Ho! Ho! A little Property was it?"

"How should I know whether it was little or big?"

"Come now, Mister. I don't, as a general rule, give away information, because I find that it keeps well and sometimes gets to be worth money. But I'll give you this, because there isn't a man, woman, or child in Southwark who couldn't tell you as much. Mr. Norbery died five years ago, in this very house. He left a hundred and forty thousand pounds—a hundred and

forty thousand pounds—think of that—a hundred and forty thousand pounds! Come now. Call that a little Property?"

"Indeed, no."

"Well—but that wasn't all. There was houses and shops—whole rows of houses and shops. I thought I knew most of his Property; but I didn't—not the quarter. To be sure, he always collected his rents himself."

"A great Property, truly. And what became of it?"

"What became of it? Ah!" Mr. Mayes rubbed his chin and shook his head. "What became of it? If Mr. Norbery only knew what did become of it, he would come to life again. He would, indeed. There was no Will found among his papers, and there were no heirs to claim the Estate."

"No heirs?" Laurence thought of the Poet. "No Will? No heirs to claim the Estate?"

"No heirs. And so the Treasury—actually the Treasury—seized it for the Crown. The Queen got it. Think of that—the Queen! They scooped up all that money and gave it to the Queen. To think that Mr. Norbery should have saved and scraped all his life—only to make the Queen richer!"

"No Will?" Laurence repeated.

"There was no Will. Everything was in order: all his investments were found entered in his private books—not a paper out of its place. But no Will. There was a box—one of those very boxes"—he pointed to the rows of tin boxes—"in Lawyer Backler's office, with Mr. Norbery's name upon it. But the papers in it were old and worthless. No Will."

No Will! Mr. Norbery dead! The Estates claimed

for the Crown! And no heirs. Then as to Clement Indagine—what was he about?

Nothing ever happens as we expect—this was one of the first discoveries made in philosophy—but this turn of events was more than unexpected. It changed the whole position. If the rightful heirs did not choose to claim the property—and such a property—they must have known the relationship: what was there left to be done? No Will: then his mother had nothing to do with the business, nor he either.

"His late wife's relations," Mr. Mayes went on, "sent a petition to the Treasury. But they got nothing because they couldn't show that they had any call to expect anything. Why, they had no more right to the money than I had. Not so much, because I helped the old man to make it."

"This is very wonderful," said Laurence.

"Perhaps you're another of 'em," said Mr. Mayes.

"Perhaps I am. No doubt I must be another of 'em. Who are they?"

"Relations. They've turned up by hundreds. No one could have believed there were so may Norberys in the world. They've heard of it in America and crossed the ocean to prove their claim. But they couldn't. They could prove that their name was Norbery, and they couldn't get no further. P'raps your name is Norbery too. Yet you didn't so much as know that he was dead. As for where he come from nobody knows. Nobody ever heard. They found half a dozen certificates of baptism, any one of which might have been the old man's, but they couldn't prove it."

"But he had a sister——" Laurence stopped short.

"How d'ye know that? A sister? Well, I was once told a cock and a bull story about a sister and the old Queen's Bench Prison. A sister?"

"Perhaps I was misinformed," said Laurence.

"I wonder if it's true. A sister. How do you know, and who are you, Mister?"

"Come, Mr. Mayes, let us be business men. That is my concern."

"You can't be one of the sister's sons—or grandsons. Yet you may be—why not? There's a something in your face that I seem to recollect. Look here, young gentleman." Mr. Mayes resumed his seat, and with it his aspect of smiling benevolence, with his thumbs in their former position. "If you can prove that you are a cousin or a nephew or anything, this great fortune is yours—it is yours. Think of that. A hundred and forty thousand pounds; not to speak of the house property! All your own. And you only about five-and-twenty. Why, you might more than double it by the time you were fifty. You might make it a million before you died. A million! Look here, young gentleman. Confide your case to me. I know all about Mr. Norbery. I'll carry it through for you, and when it is finished I will take, for my own trouble, just a little ten per cent. on all I have made for you. Is that fair? Ten per cent. for me, and ninety—ninety per cent. on a hundred and forty thousand pounds—for you. Why there's no proportion in it."

"Nothing could be fairer, Mr. Mayes. Unfortunately, however, I am not a cousin or any relation."

"Ah! that's a pity now." Once more he abandoned

benevolence. "Well," he said in an altered voice, "if that is all you came to know, you've had as much information as you are going to get. Anything else, you'll be charged for. Time's money here, young man, whatever it may be in Australia."

"There was a Will," said Laurence.

Mr. Mayes looked up sharply.

"How do you know that? What do you know?"

"There was a Will. I know so much. I know, too, where it was signed and witnessed."

"Where was it signed and witnessed?"

"At the office of a lawyer named Backler."

"He is dead. He died two months after Mr. Norbery. But he'd gone silly with too much rum-and-water, and he couldn't answer any questions. Go on."

"The Will was drawn by that man: it was signed and witnessed in his office, thirty years ago. And you yourself were one of the witnesses."

Mr. Mayes opened the door of the inner room, but it was empty. The Chevalier was still absent in quest of the potatoes.

"I don't know who you are, young gentleman, but"—here his voice fell to a whisper—"so far, your information is correct. I was one of the witnesses. There was a Will."

"What became of that Will?"

"I don't know. I am still looking for it. Mr. Norbery may have destroyed it, but I don't think he did. If he had he would have made another. What? Let all his money go to the Crown? No, Sir. As for the contents of that Will, I suppose if you know so much you know a little more."

"Well," said Laurence cautiously, "when the Will is found you will know as much as I."

"And pray, Sir," asked Mr. Mayes, with as much of an approach to a bullying tone as the superior appearance of this young man would permit—"pray, Sir, who are you?"

"That concerns myself."

"You are not a claimant: you know there was a Will: you pretend to know the provisions of the Will."

"No," said Laurence, "I make no pretences. Never mind me, Mr. Mayes. Go on searching for that Will. If you find it, we will talk about the next step. You go on looking for it. How are you looking for it? Where are you looking?"

"That's my business."

"So it is—so it is."

"If I do find it, them that benefit by it will have to benefit me first."

"Find it first. Find it first, Mr. Mayes."

"As for me"—Mr. Mayes continued to follow the same line of thought—"I do myself well whenever I can. And I don't look after my friends till I am done well."

"Praiseworthy indeed," Laurence murmured.

"Therefore, if you want me to search, you will have to pay me for my time and trouble."

"Oh, no! No, Mr. Mayes." Laurence laughed pleasantly. "Find it first. Search for it or not, just as you like. I will look in now and then perhaps, just to inquire, you know, if the property is left to me."

Mr. Mayes betrayed in his face rising wrath. But he remembered that his visitor might know, perhaps,

more than he himself knew about the Will, and he resisted the temptation to use swear words.

"Well," he said, "it's your own look-out. You know best. Whatever I find I shan't give it away. Don't expect it. Everybody knows me. There's nothing to hide, with me. I buy cheap and I sell dear. That's my motto. I make a bargain and I stick to it."

"Quite right, Mr. Mayes. Quite right. You are, indeed, the successor of Mr. Norbery."

Five minutes afterwards, the Chevalier came back, bearing in a basket the potatoes and the chops.

"Chevalier," his master called, "put down the things and come here. Do you remember going through the papers I bought out of Lawyer Backler's office, when he died five years ago?"

The Chevalier shook his head.

"You forget everything. I believe you've got a softening. If you took the interest in your work that you ought, considering what you cost, you would remember."

"How can I remember what happened before I came here? Five years ago I had not the honour of serving you."

"Humph! Come upstairs."

Mr. Mayes led the way to the first floor. He unlocked the door of the back room. There was no furniture in it at all, but the floor was piled with old letters and papers, tied with red tape and covered with dust. They were lying just as they had been thrown out of the sacks when Mr. Mayes bought them.

"I got them cheap, Chevalier. Mr. Norbery began

the collection. He showed me how to buy up old papers and to learn the secrets. When he died I bought all his. After the Treasury people had gone through them in search of a Will, they sent them off to be destroyed. But I stopped the man. Just in time, I was. Said his orders were to take 'em to the Mills. Orders be blowed! Let 'em stay where they are, I says, giving him a peep at half-a-crown. Oh! I got the bundle cheap. And then old Backler died and I got his papers, too, much in the same way. Some day, I thought, I would sit down and read the lot. Look! There's the row of old Norbery's books. Every transaction he ever had in his life is in these books. Thousands of secrets there! Thousands of pounds to be made out of them. Think of the family secrets! Think of the forgeries and embezzlements that have been bought off and squared—no one any the wiser! Think of the respectable men—churchwardens and deacons and elders—they believe the old story is dead and gone and forgotten! And think of going down with the proofs in your pocket. What will you give for this little bundle of papers, says you? Eh? Eh? There's thousands in it. But I'm too busy. Besides, I don't like reading papers. Chevalier, if I could only trust you to do it for me!"

Replied the Chevalier in his soft and gentle voice:

"I have never learned to say to a gentleman—Give me money or I will tell your secret."

"No; you never learned anything half so useful in your dam fool of a country," said his employer, who, it will be remarked, had acquired the elements of sarcasm. "You're a Blockhead and an Ass," he went

on falling back upon more familiar and more readily handled weapons.

"Very likely. I must be both or I should not be here. Shall I go below to prepare the potatoes for the pot?"

"I tell you what you shall do."

"I am in your service. Command me."

"Get a chair and a table and bring them here. Pile all these papers on one side and read every one. Whenever you come to one that's got the name of Norbery in it, lay it apart. Then go through these, and if you find anything about his sister, or if you find his Will, or if you find anything that's important—but you won't—you're such a confounded fool, Chevalier. However, try—Mr. Norbery's sister, you know."

"I quite understand. Mr. Norbery's sister. You wish to find a secret concerning Mr. Norbery's sister. Or you wish to find a Will."

"You are to do nothing else, Chevalier. Lord! It's worth trying for. He had a sister, that young swell said. Some of 'em used to say so twenty years ago. You'll do nothing else all day long, Chevalier, do you hear?"

"I suppose that I may stop the search in order to fry the chops, and boil the potatoes, and fetch the beer."

"Nobleman! we must eat." Mr. Mayes conceded this point gracefully. "Slack off for meals."

In this office the word clerk included the word cook. It is not usual. But why not? Both words begin and end with the same letter. The Chevalier was engaged as clerk, a word which might, like the word doctor in a merchant ship, have two meanings. That

clerk is doubly valuable who can dish up a toothsome meal in a house where no servant is kept and only an old woman comes in morning and evening, like a laundress of Gray's Inn, to remove the husks and shells and shucks, and to wash the plates. He is very valuable if you get him so cheap as Mr. Mayes got the Chevalier: hours from eight to eight in return for bed and board and—no, one cannot—must not—reveal the whole truth. There are some things—the marketable value of a first novel: the price received for a first picture: and the salary given to such exiles as the Chevalier—which must not be told.

"I wonder," said Mr. Mayes in conclusion, "how the old man did leave his money. I'm certain he never destroyed that Will, and I'm certain he never made another. If he had, he would have made me witness it. As for leaving any to his oldest friend—meaning me—he wasn't made that way. Keep your eyes open over them papers, Chevalier."

His clerk inclined his head gravely.

"And I wonder who the young swell was. Wouldn't leave his name and address. Said he came from Australia. Ah! From Australia, he said. Who can there be in Australia belonging to Mr. Norbery? I never heard him mention Australia. I don't believe he knew that there was such a place. He talked pretty free towards the end, when his wits began to wander, but I never heard him talk about Australia. But he had a sister. That young fellow knows more than he would own to. I'm sure he knows about the sister. Perhaps he's a lawyer's clerk sent over to find out. Why should they send a man over? There's lots of lawyer's clerks here.

Perhaps he's a friend. Perhaps he's come to make up a story. As for his not knowing about the Crown and the Estate and the rest of it, that's his artfulness, Chevalier. Mind that. And now let's find out what we can. I wonder who the fellow is."

The Chevalier, who had begun to turn over some of the dusty papers, made no reply at all. Perhaps he had forgotten the fact that he knew the name of the young gentleman: perhaps he was a silent Chevalier, who only answered when he was questioned. Perhaps he thought that his duty was simply to obey orders. Perhaps he was not listening. This is possible, because the dust of the papers at this moment caused him to sneeze with enthusiasm.

## CHAPTER VII.

### ON THE BRIDGE.

LAURENCE left the Successor to S. Norbery and turned Citywards, his mind a wreck, gone to pieces upon the Rock of the Unexpected. Only an hour before he had sallied forth serenely confident, his mother's Instructions in his pocket, anxious only about taking the first step. Well. That first step had been taken, and lo! it was like unto the historical kick which shattered the Castle of Cards. There was no Will: it must therefore have been destroyed. Wills, he knew very well, are never lost; they are kept carefully in strong boxes: they are sometimes kept in duplicate: the drafts or original instructions of the client are kept as well: all

the papers concerning the Will witnessed by the man Mayes must have been kept by the solicitor who drew it, unless he had received instructions to destroy them. Moreover, his mother had nothing to go upon but the assurance—certainly it bore the appearance of truth—of an angry man. There was no other proof that this Will, which had been undoubtedly executed, bequeathed the Property to his housekeeper. Again, Clement Indagine—here was the most extraordinary thing in the world—must know that he was the nephew, and therefore, failing any will, the heir: why in the name of Wonder did he not claim the estate? Why did he allow the Crown to take his property—his own undoubted property? And, things being so, what further business had he himself upon Bank Side? Why not go back to his hotel and address himself seriously to the Theatres, the Picture Galleries, the Restaurants and the streets of the West End—the only part of London which, as a rule, the Colonial visitor ever sees? On the whole he felt inclined to resent this turn of affairs. Since he could not enact the part, melodramatic but always effective, of the man who turns up in the last act to set everything right, why not go away at once?

* * * * * * * *

Anybody who pleases may fill up the space indicated by these stars. It must be devoted to following up the further thoughts of this young man, rudely deprived of the power of doing, in order to gratify his mother, a really great, noble, virtuous, and disinterested action—that of a signal Reparation of a Great Wrong—all in capitals. This blow naturally made him, for the moment, sulky. When we follow with the tourists

—a bleating flock—who come to look at the show place of some great Lord, and when we hear the heavy and heartfelt sighs which escape them as they are personally conducted through the old hall, to the library, to the drawing-room, to the dining-room, to the gardens, to the stables, we must always remember that these are not the sighs of spite against fortune which has left this flock so poor, but of sorrow that they are not so rich as to do great and noble deeds. With the key furnished by such a reflection, nothing is easier than to fill up this space. How greatly would many modern histories be improved if such spaces were left everywhere between the incidents, for the reader to fill up out of his own imaginative head!

I say, therefore, this space being now filled up, that Laurence was naturally sulky and resentful against Fortune, that poor goddess who for one grateful friend—and he never half grateful enough—makes every day a thousand enemies. One short hour before, he was the heir to a Property—he knew not how big it was, or how little—with which he was about to deal in a most noble and princely manner. Now he had learned, first, that the Property was of Baronial dimensions: a thing which would have made the Renunciation all the more noble: and, secondly, that his mother was not the heir to it, and that he himself would have no share or part in it at all.

When he arrived at the Bridge, he crossed to the west side and leaned over the iron railings, still considering the new position. Bank Side lay at his feet: not the Bank bathed in sunset glow: but the Bank in the morning, looking grimy, narrow and cumbered with

many wares; the Bank in the full flow and running tide of activity: every Wharf and every Factory working with zeal: the Steam Hammers justifying the cost of their erection: the cranes swinging noisily: men carrying heavy crates on their backs or wheeling full barrows up and down planks between the Bank and the barges. All these things, at first, he saw, yet saw not: in order really to see things you want not only eyes but a mind bent on seeing. If, for instance, you stand aside to watch the faces in the City Streets, you will observe, as the men walk swiftly along, that most of them see nothing. They go from end to end of Cheapside and see none of the things on the road, on the pavement, or in the shops. Millions of things go on around us in the town as well as in the country without any man seeing or regarding them. We are only curious concerning the things we know. Perhaps, since no moment of time ever really dies, but passes away and then lives ever afterwards in the mind, one may in after ages recall these things and reflect how much richer life might have been had we dwelt on our own affairs less and kept our minds more open to the things without. Laurence, therefore, leaned over these railings and looked down upon the River and the Bank with eyes wide open, yet saw nothing, being wholly occupied with this sad reverse of fortune. He was in a trance.

This trance lasted I know not how long—nor does it matter, because in such a trance as this, when the mind is at work but wholly disconnected with the body, time does not exist. It induces the anæsthetic sleep: the eyes are open and the body walks about, dodges

cabs, and avoids people; yet nothing is seen, felt, or heard. Sometimes it lasts but a second of time: sometimes it lasts a whole day:—nay, there are men so rapt in their own occupations that they see nothing else, whatever passes before their eyes, all their lives.

This trance, however, came to an end. Gradually, and little by little, Laurence discovered that just below him there was going on a great deal of business and bustle: he began to hear the noise of it: he began to see the activity of it. This was a sign that the trance was working itself out. Then, recovering consciousness, he passed through the stage of passive hearing and seeing, and began unconsciously to exercise the power of Selection. A blessed thing it is for man that he can exercise the power of Selection. Not to see all groups, but one group: not to hear all the noise, but only a part of it, as when you prefer the talk of your companion to the rolling of the carts: not to fall in love with all sweet maidens, but with one. Laurence heard no more the noises below, nor did he see the men at work, because his eye was caught by a little group of two and by a little comedietta that was being played before him in dumb show by two persons.

They stood where an idle crane left a circle free of rusty iron, casks, bricks, pipes or any other merchandise —a crane is a thing which insists on respect and elbow room. The circle was closed in and separated from the vulgar gaze of Bank Side on two sides: on one by the house or cottage belonging to the machinery of the steam crane: on another side by an irregular stack of rusty iron chains, old plates and bits of boilers. The crane stood upon the Bank and the Bank looked upon

the river, and there was the low wooden wall of thick planks, the like of which are now no longer used, to protect those who stood there. Probably Cottle the Elder, the first Academician, witnessed the setting up of this sea-wall. It was a strange spot for a trysting-place—if this was a trysting-place. For one of the two was the girl whose auburn hair the sunset had turned into gold when she rowed the skiff straight out of the West. She looked strangely incongruous in this grimy place, standing under the crane in her light grey costume with the bunch of flowers at her throat. As incongruous—as out of place—would be the apparition of Venus herself upon a hill of Middlesboro' slag.

"It is Althea herself," said Laurence. "It is Althea Indagine. It is the Goddess of the Sunset. And the fellow with her is Oliver Luttrel, the chap who is going to be the President of the Royal Society. I wonder what they are doing on Bank Side in the morning. Why is not the Pride of Science in his Laboratory? Why is not the Goddess in her little Heaven? Why does she linger on Bank Side—when there are Parks and lovely places elsewhere:—on Bank Side—among the wheelbarrows and the rusty iron? How grubby it looks in the morning! And how splendid it looked last night! Althea," he said, taking advantage of his position, "looks almost better in her natural colours than when the sunset threw a golden cloud about her. Am I an eaves-dropper? Is it mean to watch? But at least I cannot hear what they say. To watch Althea—myself unseen—is a venial and a pleasant sin."

He could not hear her voice, it is true, but he became interested in the dumb show which followed. And

since in ordinary conversation young people do not use the little exaggerations of gesture with which the mime emphasises the situation, the plot of the little drama was difficult to make out. A short-sighted man would have seen from the Bridge nothing but a young man and a girl talking together. Well, this happens everywhere. To him there would have been no comedy at all. But the young Australian had eyes as good as any sailor—as keen as any gamekeeper. He saw, not only the little gestures which a frigid civilisation still allows for the indication of emotion, but a tell-tale play of eyes and face and colour. The play was simple and without much incident. Yet it held the House—consisting of one spectator.

The young man Oliver said something. He said it with meaning and he looked at the girl steadily when he said it.

The girl started and changed colour. Then she replied, speaking quickly, as could be seen by the movement of her lips. And she turned away and looked out upon the river.

He made another little speech, and from the motion of his hands it was evident that he wished to conciliate her, but she shook her head.

"Have they quarrelled?" said Laurence. "Is it a lovers' tiff? Can Althea—Althea—be engaged to that little black beast?"

Then she turned upon him and seemed to speak out at some length and with freedom.

He laughed—it is not pretty to see a man laugh if you cannot hear him as well. And she stopped speaking and turned her face again to the river.

"It looks more than a lovers' quarrel," said Laurence. "She is really angry with him."

Then it was the other actor's turn. He explained the position, using hands and head and always gazing upon the girl. Then his hand went out and tried to take hers. She snatched it away and replied. She was evidently much moved, and her eyes filled with tears. Then she spoke again. She was remonstrating with him or entreating him to do something. He listened with a dogged, stubborn bearing.

Then she turned away and left him standing upon the Bank alone.

"It is all over," said Laurence.

Not quite. For as he looked again he saw the face of the young man change suddenly and curiously. He was clearly in a rage: when the girl was gone his mouth widened: his nose flattened: his eyes seemed to sink into sockets.

"Good Lord!" cried Laurence. "What an ugly beast it is! He looks like a skull with the hair on."

Perhaps the position of the spectator—up in the gallery so to speak—assisted in producing this strange effect.

"What does it all mean?" he asked, his interest thoroughly awakened. "I believe the future President of the Royal Society has asked the Goddess of the Sunset to be his bride and she has refused him because he is so ugly. Yet, no—I never heard of any man being refused because he was ugly. Women don't care two pence about a man's looks. Perhaps he has done something. Can he have stolen a barge? Or, perhaps the Goddess has no yearning for Science. She

looked at one time as if she was answering some threat. Could he be such a beast as to threaten her? No. That is impossible. If I thought that, I would . . . I would . . . step down the stairs and chuck him into the river. But he could not."

"Yet what matter is it to me?" he went on. "I've got nothing to do here. My mother's letter is now so much waste paper. And yet that girl——" He became pensive. "I must wait a little if only to find out what they are all about. There is the poet," he said, "who is a poor poet and yet refuses to lift his little finger to become wealthy — why? There have been plenty of poor poets since the world began, but I never remember a poor poet who might have been rich if he had chosen. And there is the Patriot—not to speak of the respectable Mayes. A story is going on of which I cannot guess either the beginning, or the middle, or the end. Now, if I stay, I shall perhaps find out this story. That will be interesting and perhaps it will not take very long. And, if I am lucky, I shall be able to strike a blow on the right side—that is, of course the side of Althea. I shall call it the Story of the Silent Heir, or the Heart of Althea. Other people may call it what they like: that is what I mean to call it."

# PART II.

## CHAPTER I.

### IN RETIREMENT.

WHEN the Cathedral Bell began to strike nine, in the leisurely and dignified manner proper to a Cathedral Bell, Althea put down her work and proceeded to make certain arrangements. That they were part of the daily routine was manifest by the unhesitating and mechanical manner in which she performed her task. A ship's steward could not lay the cloth, even for the sixth time in the day, with less waste of time for consideration than Althea showed in setting out the little round table on the hearthrug, placing the chess-board upon it, arranging the pieces, and putting the two arm-chairs in position. Everybody would understand at once, merely from her manner of doing it, that the game of chess was a daily pastime. The addition of two pipes, a jar of tobacco, and a box of lights showed that the players were men. And so rapidly did she make these preparations that the last stroke of nine was still ringing and resounding in the air when she added the tobacco as the finishing touch.

The room was that one in the house with the Doric pillars, to which twenty years before Dr. Luttrel had brought the little gipsy. The only change of any im-

portance made during this long period had been the addition of a piano laden with music. There were also a few flowers in a glass—I believe that formerly there were no flowers: and, if anything else, there was the presence of "work." The whole of woman's history is contained in the special meaning of that word. A man's work may be symbolised by the spade, the pen, the chisel—by every instrument that his wit has devised: for a woman's work the needle is the only symbol. Courage, my sisters: the world changes and you shall be changed—we shall all be changed. In another generation you shall, if you wish, as no doubt you will wish, wield the spade and brandish the pitchfork; you shall carry the rifle and handle the heavy ordnance. Perhaps the curtains—I believe that formerly there were no curtains—betrayed a woman's presence: mere man would have been contented with white blinds, or green venetians, or, at least, with hangings less dainty. The windows, which gave upon New Thames Street, were open at the top, for reasons which could be explained by residents in that street to the full satisfaction of curious inquirers. If, gentle reader, you lived in New Thames Street, you would open your windows at the top. There was a book-case full of books: they were works of modern literature and poetry. But a man of letters would not fail to note that there were no new books among them. And though there were books on the table, there were no journals, magazines, or new novels. One or two oil paintings hung on the wall—landscapes of an old-fashioned kind, imitations of the masters of fifty years ago. On the mantelshelf rested a photograph in a frame: it was the likeness of

a young man in the little cap, the shawl over the shoulder, and the boots of a Heidelberg student—none other, in fact, than Oliver, once the gipsy, now a Lecturer in Physical Science, newly made, and youngest Fellow of the Royal Society. Over the mantelshelf hung a large portrait in crayons representing another young man. He wore long flowing curls and his hair rose in a romantic wave or crest above a capacious forehead: his whiskers also appeared to have felt the tender influence of the curling irons: his head was thrown back as if in defiance of the world: his right hand, the position of which was artistically indicated by a single stroke or two, was thrust into his bosom: his lips were parted —they were frank, eager, mobile, delicate, sensitive, curved lips: the sunshine lay upon those lips—no other sunshine than that of the Muses' smiles: his eyes, which matched the lips and were at once scornful, inspired, terrible, loving, large and full, flashed with a light of genius such as, I am very certain, no portrait painter of the present day would dare to give to the most richly endowed of living men—but in those days the light which never shone from mortal eyes was considered necessary and becoming and natural in the portraits of poets and men of genius. Have we not seen it flashing from the eyes of Byron, Keats, Shelley? Nay —no rhymester so small but he too must have the bright and piercing light of inspiration glowing in his eyes. Photography has killed the eye in a fine frenzy rolling. There are even poets whose eyes are fishy. Under the portrait was the autograph of the subject, written in a fine flowing hand, with a flourish at the end—most men of genius formerly cultivated a cha-

racteristic flourish after their name—"Clement Indagine." The date of the portrait — 1851 — was also added.

When Althea had completed her arrangement of the chess-table she stood for a moment—as even the ship's steward above mentioned will do when he has laid even his seventh or eighth cloth of the day—to catch the artistic effect. We are always, when one comes to think of it, setting the scene for the next Act, and Woman is the domestic stage manager. It was the last Act of the day for which she set this scene: the silent game of chess and the evening tobacco with which her father the Poet and her uncle the Doctor finished the day, while she sat beside them, also in silence, working or reading, unless she played softly so as not to disturb the combinations of the game; save for her music the house was very silent always.

Then the door opened and the original of the crayon portrait appeared. You have seen him already —the man with the long white flowing hair and the brown velvet jacket. His curly black whiskers had now grown downwards and made a beautiful white beard, but he was still to be recognised as the natural development of the portrait of 1851. Many men at sixty are not the natural development, but the distortion, of their own portraits at five-and-twenty. Althea greeted him with a smile on her lips and a doubt in her eyes. Something unusual, she perceived, had happened. Her father's eyes were restless: his hands were trembling: his cheek was flushed: there was excitement in his face.

"Well, dear," she said, "you have been on the

Bank this evening? Did you speak to anyone? The Doctor was called out an hour ago. Will you wait for him, or will you take your pipe at once?"

"Called out, was he? Sick people show a great want of consideration sometimes. No, dear—no—I will wait a little." He sat down and began mechanically to play with the pawns, opening with an old and favourite gambit. "Yes, child, yes." He answered her question with a curious abruptness. "Yes, I have been on the Bank. Lucius Cottle was there, and the Chevalier was there, and a stranger, a young gentleman, was with them—and—and—a very curious and remarkable thing happened—I am not sorry that the Doctor has been called out—a very strange thing indeed, a thing which I never looked for—I would rather talk it over quietly with you, before he comes back. Yet, to be sure, it ought not to be strange. You will not be surprised, I dare say, though you will certainly be pleased."

"What was it? The young gentleman was Mr. Laurence Waller, I suppose, the new lodger at the Cottles'."

"Possibly. Possibly. What interest have I in the man? None whatever. What does it matter to me if a man takes a lodging on Bank Side on purpose to look at me?"

"To look at you?"

"To look at me, Althea," he repeated sternly, as if there must not be allowed the least doubt upon that point. "As I passed this company of three and nodded to Lucius the young man gazed at me with a curiosity and interest which would have been impertinent, but

that I overheard him whisper to Lucius Cottle, 'Oh! Is that really the Poet?—Really, the Poet?' he asked. A second time and a third time I passed them on my walk to and fro, and every time that young man followed me with eyes of curiosity. Well, Althea, I cannot help it." He leaned back in an attitude of resignation. "If the world has at last found out my retreat I must abandon any further pretence and just expect to be besieged. It may be natural, no doubt, but it is, I confess, unexpected. I might have expected it thirty years ago. Then it would have seemed more natural. Now, it causes a certain kind of shock. Yet it is not unpleasing."

"Mr. Waller has come from Australia," said his daughter, wondering. "He told me that he had come on business. To be sure that need not prevent him from showing a natural curiosity in the appearance of a poet."

"From Australia! Come from Australia! All that distance on purpose to look upon my face!" He leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. "This, Althea, is gratifying. I confess that it gratifies me very much. It is one of the few clear and tangible proofs of Fame which meet us. We poets move the world, but sometimes only know it by repeated Editions. Sometimes I have thought that I did wrong not to read the papers. I should at least have caught the regrets of the world —its regrets and its repentance for having silenced a Poet—as if Poets were as plentiful as cob-nuts! But no—no—the regrets would have come too late. Let me have no more—no more—to do with the present." He got up and looked at his own portrait. "Thirty

years ago," he said sighing, "I was thirty years old. It was young to be driven from the world. But Keats was killed—they killed him—at an earlier age. Where are they—the men who drove me forth? Dead perhaps—forgotten perhaps—languishing, very likely—long since in merited obscurity. As for the man they hounded down, people now come from the uttermost parts of the earth—I say, Althea, from the uttermost parts of the earth—only to gaze upon him. I am now old, but they have not forgotten me. They have forgotten, I think, the men who did the wrong; but the Poet they have not forgotten."

"They can never forget you, father."

"As I came home," he said with such an elation in his voice and such a light in his eyes—though still far short of the electric spark shown in the Portrait—as his daughter had never before witnessed, "I began to consider what this might mean. And I understand now—oh! yes"—his voice sank to a happy murmur. "You have made me understand, my dear. The love of the English speaking races for a Poet does not begin in far Australia: it is carried thither from home—from these shores: it begins at home: if a man's fame is firmly established over there it must be still more firmly planted here. Do you follow me so far, Althea? It must be still more firmly planted here. Very well. Then think. My poems must therefore be, by this time, household words. They must be learned in schools and quoted in articles: they must have been made, long since, the subject of essays and criticism—reverent criticism—in the great Quarterlies, which move the thought of the world"—it has been already ex-

plained that this Poet lived still in the Fifties, when the great Quarterlies were still great. "And they must be read," he continued, "in America and . . . and . . ." He turned quite pale and tottered. The thought of his own greatness, thus grown silently and unperceived by himself, was too much for him. "And now they come, from the uttermost ends of the world, only to gaze—to gaze upon the Poet. If they love me so much in Australia, what must they do in England—in London —across the river—almost at my very feet?"

"Oh!" His daughter was carried away with him by this Vision of Universal Fame. "If they love you in Australia, they must love you ten times as much at home."

"There cannot be a doubt, my dear," he replied, trying to be cold. "I see it all plainly. While I have been waiting here in obscurity the Poems have been slowly—slowly, but surely—sinking into the hearts of the people and circling wider and wider over the world. All the way from Australia! Then think of the power which those poems must have become—here—there—in America—everywhere—all round the globe—the habitable globe. The Englishman speaks to half the globe—nothing less. Why, my dear, a man ought to be satisfied with such success as this. It atones. My daughter, tell me"—he spread out his arms as if they had been the wings of Pegasus—"tell me—have I lived in vain?"

He did not expect any answer to this question—nor was there any answer possible save the murmurous assent of filial piety. Then he turned to the bookcase and took down a volume—it was an octavo of the form

always until quite recently used by poets—and held it affectionately between his two hands. "I cannot open it, Althea," he said, cuddling and hugging and pressing the volume to his bosom. "Never once, since I retired, have I desired to open it. This, my dear, is what the world cannot understand. It is the sacredness of verse: of this book have I made an altar on which I have laid all that is best and noblest in myself." He bowed his head over his own book as one who worships. And his eyes softened and glowed. "Having placed it there, and knelt before the altar, and prayed awhile, I came away. The precious part of me—the Immortal part—is here—between these two boards." His eyes grew humid, his voice sank. He fondled the book again affectionately and replaced it on the shelf. "It is for others to read it now, not for me. I have done my part. It is for you, my child, to use it for the uplifting and the strengthening of your soul. Yes—yes—I know. You have so used it—yes—yes—in your thoughts and in your daily conversation—I have watched you day by day—I have seen the influence of that verse. From communion with his poetry at last you reflect your father's mind. My dear," he laid his hand tenderly on Althea's head, "if I had but one reader in all the world, and that reader were my daughter, I should not have lived in vain." He sighed again, and descended to a lower level.

"Tell me about this young man from Australia," he said, sitting down. "He says he has come on business from Australia, does he? Australian business on Bank Side? Is the colony of New South Wales going to buy scrap iron and empty petroleum casks? And he actually

takes a lodging in Bank Side! I have lived here for thirty years and I have never before heard of a stranger coming to live for choice in Bank Side. Why should he? He calls it business, does he? My dear, the excuse is too transparent. But he is young and we will excuse him. Business! Ha! ha! Youth is modest and does not like to confess even its enthusiasm. Why, after all, I like him all the better for it. These reticences, these shrinkings, these hesitations—they are sometimes the note of a great mind—I like him all the better. Well, my dear, I thought to have slipped through life unseen. But it seems as if that dream was to be dispelled."

"Dear father," said Althea, taking his hand, "you must think of me and of my pride in you if people come to look at you." She was now perfectly and completely carried away by this vision of popularity. "Remember that the more popular you become, the prouder it will make me. But, indeed, I could never be prouder of my father—whatever glory may be showered upon him—than I am already."

"The sight of that young man," the Poet continued, getting up again restlessly, "has brought back the memory of the old life. Why? I do not know. It forces itself upon me now and then unbidden. The old life among the wits and the poets. We sat in Fleet Street Taverns—there were the Cock and the Cheshire Cheese and the Rainbow and the Mitre and Dick's—over port and whisky punch—Dickens used to make gin punch, I remember—and we talked till the small hours: and such talk! I suppose they sit there still to drink and talk! But most of them must be dead. Thirty years ago! Thackeray and Dickens and—oh!

I knew them all—I knew them. I sat in familiar intercourse with them all. There were Charles Reade, Mark Lemon, Shirley, Brooks, Albert Smith, Bulwer Lytton, Monckton Milnes, Douglas Jerrold—I cannot remember all their names. Where are they all now? It was a glorious time. And I was with them and one of them. And yet they suffered me—these my friends suffered me—to be driven out through jealousy and spite. Well: it is long ago now, and an old story. Althea, I am restless this evening." He shivered as one that had a fever upon him. "I feel as if something was impending. I feel as if I must go back to those taverns and be welcomed by my old friends in the time of triumph.—I am disturbed. —Something is going to happen."

"O father!—all because a young gentleman looked at you?"

"Something, my dear," he repeated obstinately, "is certainly going to happen." He sat down again and took up his pipe as if he would show how a true Philosopher should confront any fate.

It was, if you consider it, a safe thing to prophesy because the word "something" covers a large area and may be interpreted in many ways, as, for instance, a disappointment with a breakfast egg at one end of things, or an earthquake at the other end. In this case the Prophet was justified by the event because something did happen. The street door was opened and slammed and voices were heard in the Hall. Althea started. One of them was the voice of their new acquaintance —the very stranger from Australia of whom they had been talking. Althea started, because a visit from a new acquaintance was an absolutely unique event in her

experience. She was now nineteen years of age. Not once during her whole life had she ever before known the arrival of a stranger. Their family circle was never broken. Oliver, before he went to Germany and was still at St. Olave's School, brought no boys home to Bank Side: the Cottle girls ran in and out as they pleased: but no visitor ever called.

"Clement," said the Doctor cheerily, "I have brought a young gentleman from Australia who desires the honour of your acquaintance."

"The great honour," said this stranger.

Mr. Indagine bowed coldly—such tribute to a poet must be received as of everyday occurrence: but then his natural goodness of heart came back to him and he held out his hand.

"I am very pleased, Sir," he said, "to receive you. We live retired and—and in fact—we see few visitors. You have come from Australia"—it was not in human nature to refrain from one look of triumph in the direction of his daughter—"all the way from Australia in order to obtain this introduction?"

"It was one of the reasons of my journey," said the young man with truth.

"And what, Sir," asked Mr. Indagine, "does the Australian—the Antilpoda world—say now of the attack—the ferocious and unprecedented attack—which drove me out of human society?"

"Ah!" the Doctor echoed, "what do they say now?"

"Why—really"—Laurence showed a momentary confusion—"we are a young people and have hardly yet begun to discuss things literary. Among those, however, who know the circumstances, there is but one opinion."

"There can be but one opinion," said the Doctor.

The Poet bowed. "It is gratifying to find the world convinced at last. And which, Sir, of the poems is your own especial favourite?"

"I have no favourite," Laurence replied hastily and avoiding Althea's eyes which were turned upon him, expectant. "Do not question me about your poems, Sir, or I may be led to speak in your presence too warmly."

"Nay, nay"—Mr. Indagine actually laughed—when had Althea seen him laugh before? "Well: you may respect the modesty of an author, young gentleman, in his presence: but—outside—outside—say all you think and feel—freely. Now let us talk. Althea, my dear, play something softly. Gentle music encourages ideas."

The chess-board was neglected: the pipe was laid down: and the Man of Letters appeared. Mr. Indagine talked.

When people live together a great deal they leave off talking unless something unexpected happens, or unless, which is not uncommon, they belong to that social level which is perpetually occupied with the behaviour of the brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, cousins, nephews, nieces and sisters-in-law. That behaviour, which is always such as could never have been expected, furnishes a topic which endures throughout the longest life, is always interesting. But in this circle there were no near relations whose conduct could be discussed. Mr. Indagine had married the Doctor's only sister, who was dead: and his own brother had long since gone away and disappeared. It will, therefore, be understood that these two elderly gentlemen had for many years

ceased to talk much. Therefore it was as if the Poet should break out in a new line when he began to discourse upon literature.

It was also as if he were letting free a flood long dammed up. Or as if he were pouring out of a vessel full to the brim and overflowing: or as if he had been waiting all these years for a sympathetic listener. The Doctor, in fact, was not possessed of the literary mind.

Althea meanwhile continued to play: it was old music—Weber's Last Waltz—one of the Songs without Words—music that flowed softly and filled the mind with peace and made the imagination as wax to be moulded by the speaker. The Australian disciple, to whom the discussion was addressed, listened to the Sage with great deference, occasionally inclining his head in order to show that his attention was riveted and that he did not mean to lose one single word.

The discourse was remarkable not only because it turned wholly upon the Literature of the Fifties—any essayist might have done the same thing—but because it spoke of these works as if they were the newest things out, and because the speaker employed in illustrating his points the echoes of that time. The great books of the Fifties include "In Memoriam," "David Copperfield," "Esmond," "The Woman in White," "Adam Bede," "Cranford," "Christie Johnston," and "Hypatia," among many others. This Decade hath, forsooth, a goodly record. Yet it must be owned that between the current ideas of '88 and those of '58 there is a gulf of more than thirty years. To listen to the old man whitehaired, eloquent, who ignored all that had been done since the latter date, caused a curious and

not unpleasant sensation. Laurence began pleasantly to feel as if he were himself transported back to the Fifties and was sitting in judgment not upon his ancestors but upon his contemporaries. He was at the Tavern, in the circle of the very men themselves. Thackeray came in and went out: Douglas Jerrold said a good thing full of impudence: Dickens looked in and laughed: the night was young and the circle was full. The presence of the girl sitting beside him on her music-stool did not interfere with this Vision of the Past—One who falls into such a Vision sees through solid bodies, dresses, furniture, and the like. If Ghosts are transparent, so also are solid things when Ghosts are behind them. If the Poet could so charm them with speech alone, what could he not do if he were to begin to sing?

In the middle of the talk, the other young man, Oliver, opened the door and stole quietly in. He looked extremely surprised at the sight of the visitor and sat down in silence. But the magician had no power over Oliver. He remained in the Present, and looked on with eyes which betrayed boredom and lack of interest.

At last the talker ran down. Then they all came back to the Present again, and sat no longer at the Garrick Club or in Cock or Rainbow Tavern, but in the little room of the house in New Thames Street which leadeth off Bank Side.

"We will talk again, young gentleman," said Mr. Indagine, in conclusion. "Your views are sound and your observations show reading and grasp." Laurence had not uttered one word. "Come again and come often while you stay in London. It is pleasing and

novel to learn the literary and poetical attitude of Australia. There is not in this civilised part of London one single Club or Tavern at which a man may hope to find a scholar or a poet. Yet the taverns still stand in which Shakespeare and his friends caroused near the Globe and the Rose. There is not here even a second-hand book shop."

"He must not go yet," cried the Doctor. "What? Has Bank Side no hospitality? Althea, my dear, Mr. Waller will take——"

This is an age of Apollinaris water. Therefore, one must refrain from explaining what it was that Laurence was offered and what he accepted. Suffice it to say that the Poet took some and the Doctor too, and that Laurence took tobacco with it, and that it was in a big glass and sparkled if held up to the light. The Poet relapsed into silence, but he sat with a benignant smile, and he suffered, without a murmur, the conversation to run on quite modern topics and things of local interest.

Then Laurence spoke of Bank Side and of the people he had already met, especially the interesting family of the Cottles. And then, looking furtively at the Poet, he launched a question. It was a question even more closely connected with his visit than the immortal poems.

"There was once," he said slowly, "a certain Mr. Norbery living near here. Did you know anything of him?" He addressed the Doctor, but he looked, as has been said, towards the Poet.

This innocent question fell into the circle like a bomb-shell.

Mr. Indagine started violently and his face became

a deep crimson. The Doctor also started and looked at his brother-in-law as if curious to see how he would take it. And Althea laid her hand upon her father as if to soothe and restrain him. And Oliver looked suspicious. What had he done?

"He is dead. Mr. Norbery is dead," said the Doctor. "He died five years ago. Let us not talk about him."

"He was a bad man." Mr. Indagine sat up with a sudden change of manner as if stung into rage. "A hard, cruel man——"

"Yes, father, yes. But he is dead," said Althea, patting his hand.

"Is he dead? Let his name be never mentioned in my hearing."

"I am truly sorry," said Laurence, "that I did mention it."

"Is he dead?" Mr. Indagine repeated. "I have never cared to ask whether he was alive or dead. If he is dead and can do no more harm, so much the better for the world. Let us all forget his name as speedily as may be."

"Why—" thought Laurence, "they actually know nothing!" But Oliver looked at him with suspicion from the black pent-house of his thick eyebrows.

But Mr. Indagine's wrath died out like a fire of shavings, and he settled himself again in his chair.

"Say no more, young gentleman. Say no more. You have helped me to a pleasant evening. You have brought me a laurel from Australia. I should not be human if I were not gratified. Come often and talk with me. We will not speak of ignoble people—but of

the Muses and their favourites. We will wander among the asphodels of Parnassus. Good night, Sir," he grasped Laurence's hand warmly. "Good night, my dear Sir—come again—come often."

## CHAPTER II.

### FAIR FRIENDSHIP.

ONCE more Althea stood at the head of the Stairs, dressed for the river in a straw hat and a loose jacket that left her arms free. The boat was rocking with the swell of the tide at her feet: beside her stood her new acquaintance, Mr. Laurence Waller.

"If you would really like to come with me," she said. "I generally go alone: but if you are sure that you would like——"

"I should like nothing better," he replied. "Let me take the sculls and you shall steer and tell me about the river as we go. Remember that I have never been on it yet."

It was Saturday afternoon, a little after two. Work was knocked off: the men had ceased to run up and down the planks with their baskets of broken glass or their loads of scrap iron: the great gates of the wharves were closed: the barges were left alone with their cargoes until Monday. A Sabbath calm already prevailed upon the Bank.

Althea ran down the steps and took her place in the stern, while her companion followed and untied the painter and shoved off. Such progress in Fair Friend-

ship may be made in two or three days by a careful young man who takes pains: such are the prizes awarded to such young men as deserve them: and so great was the gratitude felt by this young lady towards the man who had come all the way from Australia to gaze upon her father.

The day was bright: a fresh breeze crisped and curled the water into little dancing waves: it drove the light clouds across the sky and caused the flying shadows to chase each other over the broad surface of the river: it made Althea's cheek to glow and her eyes to brighten. Eyes more beautiful: cheek more glowing: Laurence thought he had never seen.

He addressed himself, at first, to getting out from the rows of barges into mid-stream and to showing the young lady that an Australian, as well as a Thames waterman, may know how to feather his oars with ease and dexterity. Now a girl's admiration of ease and dexterity in any art is in direct proportion to her own knowledge of that art; so that Althea, who understood good rowing, was quick to appreciate the neatness with which her companion handled the sculls. She was also, during the half-hour that followed, enabled to recognise strength of muscle and length of wind. This young man could not only row but he could last.

They went up stream with the slack end of the flowing tide as far as Chelsea Reach, which is a good long pull. Althea was silent at first, but presently began to beguile the way by pointing out the places, houses, churches, bridges, and palaces as they passed. She talked with more courage when she perceived that her companion listened with the greatest interest—indeed

her short experience of him had already distinguished him as a young man of sympathetic manner. She found him far more ready to listen than to talk. There is a kind of young man who, in presence of a girl, is tempted to put on side, to walk round and show his muscles, to swagger and crow, and in other ways to imitate the male turkey, for purposes of mashing. There is another kind—a much more subtle and dangerous young man—who sits in humility, contented to listen in silence and to encourage the girl. Laurence belonged to this kind of young man. In the middle of Chelsea Reach he stopped, obedient to the Captain of the ship, and turned her bows. Then they both fell into silence gazing upon the river. And presently Laurence remarked that the smile had died out upon Althea's lips; that her face was become grave: and that her eyes were dreamy. She looked as one carried away in a vision.

Chelsea Reach is never crowded with boats: at three o'clock even on a Saturday in June it is too early for the London Clubs, but there were on the water one or two scullers in the light craft which seem so easy to be pulled through the water that one wonders how it is they can cause the rower to pant and puff, his face to flush: his brow to stream, his manly chest to heave and his arms to quiver just as much as if he were tugging at the oar of the accursed galley of Algiers or the biggest barge of Bank Side. There were no penny steamboats visible: as for canoes, randans, pleasure boats, and steam launches, one does not expect them lower down than Putney. There were two or three barges just beginning to drop down stream, blundering and staggering, with the tide: and there was a noisy

little tug, all engine and paddle-wheels, which hauled and lugged along a team of unwilling lighters each with one man on board labouring like ten men to keep her bows straight and her stern clear.

Five minutes passed—ten minutes: but the girl remained silent and motionless: her thoughts far away. What was she thinking of? The stillness of her face suited her beauty: a really sweet face seems to look best with a certain gravity upon it. She sat as motionless as if she had been in a trance.

Laurence dipped the sculls and pulled a short stroke. The girl started and sat upright.

"I have been dreaming, I am afraid," she said.

"I think you have. Do you often fall a-dreaming?"

"Yes—very often. When one is quite alone, you know—at home when my father is in his study and my uncle is out with his patients: and on the river when I am by myself—it is so easy to fall into dreams."

"If I could ask you to tell me your dreams, I might interpret them for you, perhaps."

"They are not worth telling. Are you very tired? Shall I change places with you?"

"I am not in the least tired, thank you. The river is splendid. I am truly grateful to you for letting me come with you—what a blessed chance that I have remained at Bank Side!"

"My father was afraid that you would think it such a poor place—and go away. Cassie said she would give you two days. We who always live there, you see, hardly understand how poor the place must look to a stranger."

"Well—Bank Side, it is true, does look best with a little gilding of sunset upon it. But there is the river."

"Yes—there is the river—the river." She leaned forward as if to see better the stretch of water around her. "The river"—the words seemed to have a magnetic effect: her eyes again assumed the look of one whose thoughts are far away: her voice fell into a murmur and she spoke as if she was talking to herself without thinking of her companion. "The river! It is always changing: sometimes it laughs as if it thought of nothing but happiness and enjoyment: and sometimes it rolls along grey and heavy as if it were thinking of the poor people along the shores who are so miserable and so wicked: and sometimes it is as blue as the sky and sometimes it is the colour of mud. But every day the water rolls up and then rolls down again—every day —so full—so full of strength. We stand upon the bank and watch: ten thousand years ago the tide rolled up and down, and it will go on thousands and thousands of years after we are dead."

"When we are no longer standing on the shore," said Laurence, "the river may do just exactly what it pleases. Let us be happy with the present."

Youth, I suppose he meant, has nothing to do with the past or with the future; of tenses, the present alone belongs to youth. Of moods, the indicative and the imperative are meant for the use of youth. For age there are the optative and subjunctive among moods, and the past and future—I mean the Prophetic Future —among tenses. They bestow upon that chilly period of life either its chief consolations or its bitterest pangs. I am sorry that Vicesimus Cottle did not say this. As

a grammarian he would have been pleased with the illustration. Unfortunately, it never occurred to him.

Althea went on as if he had not spoken.

"It is the tide which gives life to the river. If it were not for the tide there would be a stream always flowing down. To stand on the bank and watch the current always running away without any rest or pause —to think that it goes on running all the night as well as all the day: coming one knows not whence and running one knows not whither, must fill the soul with a kind of terror as if, like time, it was always carrying something away from us. But the ebb and the flow— it is as if the river came to help us every day."

"It does," said Laurence. "The tide was first turned on when barges were invented."

Althea looked up and laughed. She was shaken out of her thoughts and called back to companionship again. Her eyes lost their dreamy look, and she sat upright and caught the strings as if she meant to attend to business.

"You must not mind my idle talk," she said. "I come upon the river so much and I am alone for such long hours that I sometimes talk out loud the things that are in my head."

"No—no—go on talking. I will listen."

"Well then—I am glad that you like the river and I am glad that your first introduction to the river has been in sunshine."

"We have plenty of sunshine in Sydney," said Laurence, "and we like it. They told me that London is the city of Perpetual Fog. Yet behold!"

"We do have fogs," Althea confessed. "That can-

not be denied. But to-day I am sure no sky could be brighter—not even the sky of Sydney."

"That is quite true," he replied.

"And no air finer."

"Again, quite true."

"And I own that the sun does make a very great difference. Look at that big lighter blundering along in the mid-stream. You would almost think that it was a live thing, a hippopotamus or something—rejoicing in her clumsy play. And look at that noisy little tug, how she pulls along the team of barges as if they weighed nothing, and it was a joy and pride for the little creature to put forth her strength. Well—on a cloudy day the big lighter would fill you with pity because it would seem so blind and helpless. And the tug would make you think of a slave writhing under the lash."

"Yes," he said. There was no need to say more than just to show that he was listening.

"Sometimes the clouds close over and the rain falls. Then one sees nothing: the banks are hidden: the barges and boats vanish: one is all alone on the water, and the rain beats on the river as if it were lashing and scourging it. Then one trembles and thinks of terrible things. I have a dream which comes to me often, of being all alone on a waste of waters with nothing visible and the rain beating down. Or one may be caught in a fog. Then the only thing is to keep close in shore and so to creep home. But the fog is not so terrible as the dark cloud and the pelting lashing rain. Once there fell a thunderstorm upon the river when I was upon it. The lightning played over the waters, and a great ball of fire burst close to the boat.

I thought that the boat and I together might be struck and suddenly destroyed and no one would ever know what had become of me. And I wondered how many people in this great world would ask the question. Half a dozen in all. It is not many to know out of all the millions."

"Not many," Laurence echoed with a little doubt in his mind as to the healthiness of this solitary communing on the river.

Then she changed and again came back, so to speak, to life.

"You are a stranger," she said, "and I suppose you do not understand what the river has always been to London. Formerly it was the highway of the people. They did not go up and down the streets: they could not because they had no carriages and the roads were rough and there were no footpaths: they took boat and so went up and down the river at their ease—it must have been much more pleasant than an omnibus. I could show you where they landed at the old stairs all along the North bank from Westminster to Wapping. Then they had sports upon the river and Pageants, and all the gentlefolk had their own boats just as in Venice everybody has his gondola. The King had the Barge of State: the Lord Mayor had his Barge of State: the City Companies, the Bishops, the great Lords, all had their Barges of State; and went up and down the river in them. In those days swans swam about the stairs: salmon were caught above Bridge: people used to go angling in the river: the bank was lined with stately houses sloping down to the river's edge—" She sighed heavily. "The river must have been beautiful in those

days. I am sure there could not have been so much mud to begin with."

"I believe the company in the boats was sometimes a little mixed," Laurence objected, timidly.

"Well, then. Think, even now, what the river is to the city, though we no longer use the boats. Think how it blows away the wasted air and brings up the fresh breeze with every tide."

"Yes," said Laurence. "I will try to think about it in this way."

"And remember what beautiful things have been written about the river. But perhaps you do not read poetry."

"I have read some poetry," said Laurence. "It is not quite the same thing."

"If you had known the Thames so long as I—Have you read Spenser? He, you know —

> Walked forth to ease his pain
> Along the shore of silver-streaming Thames:
> Whose rutty bank, the which his river hems,
> Was painted all with variable flowers
> And all his meades adorned with dainty gems
> Fit to deck maidens' brows."

"I have heard those lines."

"Then can you tell me who wrote—

> May all clean nymphs and curious water dames
> With swan-like state float up and down thy streams—?

No? It was Herrick. You ought to know Herrick. And Pope has written about the river—and—and—oh! many other poets."

Laurence made haste to change the subject. He

might have been examined in Mr. Indagine's immortal verse: in which case a disgraceful pluck awaited him.

"You are not afraid of rowing about alone?"

"Not in the least. There is nothing to fear. You can easily keep out of the way of the barges and the steamers. Out on the river you are quite free. I come here every day—it is always fine some part of the day—if only for half an hour. At home there are mean streets everywhere and men who get drunk and beat their wives: how can one walk for pleasure in those streets? On the river there is nothing mean and ugly and vulgar, though I confess that some of the buildings on the banks might be more picturesque. And then one is quite alone, and if you row up above Westminster you are quiet. You can think in peace. If one is in good spirits it is happiness enough only to row along singing—and if you feel low the fresh air and the exercise quickly bring you back to a cheerful mind."

"And always alone?"

"Always in the day. Sometimes, in the evening, Cassie or Felix will come with me. But Felix rows in a Club Four, and despises my poor little boat."

"Then sometimes, I suppose, you land and look about."

"Oh! no." Althea shook her head. "That would spoil all. I should only find modern streets. As it is, the banks are crowded with the old things that I have read of in the books about London. Quantities of things happen up and down the river. When I am rowing along I can amuse myself with bringing back the people and their houses and gardens. I should be

sorry, indeed, to land and find the old houses and the gardens gone and only mean streets in their places."

"You live in a dead and gone London," said Laurence. "Has the living London no attraction for you?"

"I do not know it. But the dead and gone London lives still. Nothing ever really dies, I have read, except the memory of wickedness. For instance, there is Battersea Park—before you—behind that Terrace."

"Oh! Battersea Park? St. James's Park I know and Hyde Park."

"This is Battersea Park. I dare say if we were to land there we should find a place like Southwark Park. Twenty or thirty years ago I believe it was only a dismal stretch of bare fields where people came to shoot pigeons and to make dogs fight and catch rats. That must have been a dreary time. But I forget that and remember a time much older, when Lord Bolingbroke lived here and had a great House with gardens down to the river bank. There was a Terrace there, and he used to walk up and down with his friends. Oh! I often see them when I—fall a-dreaming, as you say—Pope and Steele and Addison and Swift and Arbuthnot—I see them all. They walk up and down slowly in little companies of twos and threes, carrying their hats under their arms and stepping daintily in shoes and white silk stockings. I wish I could hear what they say, but that I can never do: and it would be bad manners to pull nearer the bank in order to listen, would it not?"

"Clearly. Addison himself in one of his papers reproaches young ladies in boats for listening to private conversation. If you see any of these good people this

afternoon, tell me, will you? But I believe I must be short-sighted in the matter of ghosts."

"I will tell you," the girl replied gravely. "But they only come when I am alone. On the other side —over there—Sir Thomas More lives: he has got a beautiful house built of red brick with delightful casement windows: it is covered with ivy cut and trimmed close and clinging round the stone mullions: he walks in his garden, which is full of apple and mulberry trees and standard roses, with his daughter Margaret. He has the kindest and wisest face in all the world. But I have not seen him lately. Lower down there was formerly a big Botanic Garden. I believe they have covered it with houses now, but I often meet the Physicians in their boats going to see the simples growing under glass. Every day in summer they go there, and I believe they drink wine together in a tavern after their visit. Nobody now looks so wise as the last century Physicians with their black velvet coats, their high peaked wigs and their gold-headed walking canes. They are so full of wisdom and dignity that they must have been able to cure every disease under the sun."

"Are there any on the river at this moment?"

"No—You have driven them away, they can only be seen by solitary persons. Chelsea is very rich in beautiful places. There is Ranelagh over there. It is a lovely place: there is a great round room in it for music and dancing lit by thousands of oil lamps, and there are gardens where the people walk about, the ladies in hoops and patches and the men with swords and purple coats. Sometimes I meet barges, not our great lumber-

ing Bank Side barges—but beautiful pleasure boats with music in the bows and the company in the stern, rowing up to Chelsea for a night at Ranelagh."

"Alas!" said Laurence, looking up and down the river and then across it and shading his eyes so that the sun should not hide their vision. "I see nothing, not even Lord Bolingbroke on the Terrace."

"Would you know him if you did see him?"

"N—no—I think not. I might suspect, you know. Perhaps that is the reason why I see nothing."

"It is pleasant to imagine all these things," said Althea, looking at him gravely. "They become quite real if you imagine them often. We have got the old books at home—the essays, and poems, and plays—and I have read them all, and it seems sometimes as if the life of the last century was the only life worth having, and ours was a mere existence to read about the past."

"Why," said Laurence, "if that is all you have of life—to read about the past——"

"But you—who know the world—don't you think that the world of the last century must have been ten times as pleasant as it is now?"

"No, Miss Indagine. I believe, on the other hand, that we have got the very best of everything."

"But in the old days there were assemblies and dances and water-parties and all kinds of things."

"Well—but——" Laurence looked up surprised, "isn't there plenty of dancing and music and singing still? There are the Theatres—did they act better then than they do now? Did they dance better? Did they sing better? Were the ladies more beautiful or the

men more polished? I doubt it very much. I am quite satisfied, Miss Indagine, with the present."

"Yes—perhaps," she said doubtfully. Then she laughed a little. "Oh! of course it is as you say, only it seems I should have seen something of this life if I had lived a hundred years ago. None of these things come to Bank Side, and I have come to believe that they exist no longer. The world of Society——" she looked across the river to the steeples and towers of the West—"it is over there somewhere—I should like to see it just for once. I can picture the life of the last century, but not the life of the present."

"But surely you do not stay always at Bank Side. Surely, you go, sometimes, somewhere, away from the—the place——" he looked as if he was suppressing something—an adjective perhaps.

"No, I never leave Bank Side."

"You never leave—you never go away at all?"

"No—and no one ever comes to us. We are hermits—my father and Dr. Luttrel and I, we three together. Oliver used to come for his vacations: but he never liked the place, and, to be sure, the streets all round us are very mean. Since he came back from Germany he only comes occasionally."

"Is his mind wholly given up to science?" asked Laurence. Then he remembered the comedietta of the Bridge and wished he had not asked the question.

Althea changed colour. Then she made answer in a constrained voice. "I cannot say how Oliver disposes of his mind. He gives his father very little of his society. I mean only that we live a very retired life and are wholly ignorant of society. When you are

tired of us,"—she said this with a perfect absence of coquetry,—"you will go away and forget us and we shall go on again in the old quiet way. Until you do get tired of us, come and talk with my father as often as you can. He likes you—and it is long since he talked with any one of the outside world. For thirty years he has lived apart from his fellows."

"Tired of you?" cried Laurence—but checked himself. Could one believe that there was a hermit—a girl hermit—living under the shadow of St. Paul's? But to think — no society at all! "Tell me," a sudden thought seizing him, "tell me is it possible that you have never been to a dance?"

"It is quite possible. I do not in the least know how people dance; only I am sure that the minuet has quite gone out."

"Nor to a Theatre? Nor to a party of any kind?"

"I have been nowhere. We have no friends—no one visits us—and the only girls I know are Cassie and Flavia."

"Good Heavens! What do you do every day and all day?"

"I read and work—I go out in my boat—I play a little—I work a little. That is all. It is not so dull as you would think, but sometimes I wonder what it is like in the world."

"Then in the summer. You don't stay at Bank Side in the summer?"

"Yes, we do. We have very little money, you know. My father has the house in which we live and three or four more. It is all we have got to live upon, and my

Uncle's practice is all among the poor people. If we were only rich——"

"Why," Laurence longed to tell her, "you *are* rich: you are very rich indeed. You have got an immense estate waiting for you." But he refrained. The time was not yet come.

"You live in London and yet you do not know London."

"Oh, yes, I do. I know the City of London very well and I know the Borough; as for the City, I am sure there cannot be, anywhere, a more delightful place. We have got books about the City—Cunningham and Timbs and others—and I read all that has happened in the streets and then walk about them and remember it all. Saturday afternoon is a good time because the Churches are generally open and the streets are quiet. But Sunday morning is best because the streets are quite empty and deserted. Oh! You must not think that I do not know London."

"Miss Indagine," said Laurence after a little pause, "I propose an exchange."

"What is it?"

"One to my own advantage entirely. Show me these curious places in the City and the Borough, and I will show you the West End. I have walked once down Regent Street and Bond Street and Piccadilly and I seem to know the West End right through. I have also looked in at the Academy. What do you say?"

Althea hesitated with caution newly born. It is by instinct that we suspect a snake in the grass. Yet she knew nothing about the designs of the Male Heart

Breaker, of the Designer, of the Man with no Intentions, of the mere Amuser, or of the Catholic Admirer. Man the Tippler she knew, because she frequently met him in the streets, but Man the Designer she knew not. Yet she instinctively hesitated. But the eyes which met hers were so frank and honest that she yielded.

"You will show me the World of Society and Pleasure?"

"I cannot take you into the actual houses or to their dances and parties. But I can show you the outside of things, if you please."

"Yes, I should like to see the outside of things. I accept the exchange."

"Very good, and now we are off Bank Side. Poor old Bank Side! It really does want a little gilding of the sunset. And it is Saturday afternoon. Let us begin at once. You shall take me to the City of Ghosts and Shadows; you shall show me the old merchants in their wigs and lace ruffles, and I will show you the young gentlemen in their tight collars and their pointed boots. I am *very* glad, Miss Indagine," as she sprang out of the boat and ran up the stairs, "I am very glad that I stayed at Bank Side. Why, I might have been wasting my time at the Grand Hotel, wandering about Piccadilly looking at the fine ladies, or even sitting in the stalls of the Theatres, looking at the play."

## CHAPTER III.

### POET AND PLAYER LAND.

HERE beginneth the first of many lessons. Here followeth the first of many rambles.

To him who walks abroad in London with his eyes open there are no streets—not even those of Florence and Rome—fuller of instruction and delight. But while even the most ignorant tourist gets all that his unhistorical soul can absorb—which is not much—out of the Florentine streets by diligent study of his Horner, few indeed of those who daily go up and down the London streets regard their antiquity or heed their history of a thousand years. Yet in those streets has been enacted a long drama in many acts and countless tableaux, with incidents and situations of surpassing interest, by a people incomparably more worthy than the Italians. If you see, as you may occasionally, a little party wandering about, curiously poking and prying into odd corners, armed with Baedeker or Hare, wanting to get into closed Churches and asking where are ancient monuments which have been swept away by greed and avarice—they are sure to be Americans. They cannot walk so well as the English, and pilgrimising is therefore a weariness to the flesh. Yet they continue to go on pilgrimage. Of English pilgrims to the sacred shrines and holy sites of London Town there are none.

Perhaps, if there were guides, there would be pilgrims. A cicerone who can speak is far, far more

useful than one who is only read. First of all, he knows his way and does not have to ask it constantly, and does not cause one to weep in wrong places, which is humiliating. If, for instance, there were guides like unto Althea, there certainly would flock unto the City a noble army of pilgrims, young, enthusiastic, athirst for knowledge. But there are none like unto her. And, which is the more to be deplored, she herself has now retired from the profession in which she was once so distinguished an amateur. Circumstances over which she has had positively no control have removed her from the Borough of Southwark. There is a vacancy. In these days of feminine competition, certain people have discovered that the calling of Cicerone might be found lucrative to those ladies who would take the trouble of acquiring City history and archæology. None but the resolute should attempt this branch of knowledge, which demands, to begin with, a vast amount of reading and a tenacious memory in order to acquire the necessary equipment. None, again, but the sturdy and the strong-backed should attempt to practise this profession. That young lady who cannot do her ten miles of street tramp without fatigue; who cannot bear the jolting of a cab all day long without getting a pain in the back; who has to lie down with a headache after lecturing in the streets for half a day,—had better think of some more sedentary occupation. City Cicerone: Parties personally conducted: Lectures given on the kerb: the oral history of the London streets: the wondrous tale of Church and College, of street and square, of court and alley, of river side and ancient wall, of merchant princes and stately companies—a

splendid vista opens before one. I see the guide, young, strong, and—yes, surely—beautiful, bright-eyed, enthusiastic, followed by her party of ignorant—humbly ignorant—West Enders or Americans, sallying forth to extend their knowledge and her own income: to inculcate in them respect for antiquity and to pocket for herself substantial fees: to make dumb stones speak to them and to enable herself to keep her brothers at home in the idleness due to their position as gentlemen.

"Well," said Althea, the only, the original pioneer of this profession of the future, "we will begin with this side of the river if you will put yourself in my hands. I wonder if you know the memories of the ground. This—for instance, is Poet and Player Land."

"My mind is as a tablet of virgin wax," said Laurence. "I only know that all this city is full of history. Deal with me as you think fit."

Althea considered a moment gravely, as if impressed with the responsibility of her task, and then led the way to the west end of Bank Side, where, beside the wharf with its mountain of petroleum casks, it melts and merges into Willow Street, where now no willows be this many and many a year.

"Now," she said, holding up a finger monitory. "You see, I suppose, a narrow street with warehouses and wharves—nothing else."

"Nothing else, except two lamp-posts."

"Very well. It is no use—no use at all—going any farther unless you are able to shut your eyes to everything that stands upon this ground. You must make believe, Mr. Waller. Oh! if one could not make

believe every day, it would be difficult indeed to live here."

"I will make believe, then, most obediently. Only tell me what I am to see."

"Nothing very difficult. But first of all these streets and houses must vanish."

"That is indeed easy. See! Presto!" He waved his hand. "It is done. They are gone. There are no more streets and houses. But for the moment there is nothing else. The human eye, Miss Indagine, abhors vacuity. What should I see?"

"Instead of mean streets there are beautiful gardens, leafy trees, grassy lanes, flowery hedges, and ponds."

"Certainly. Stupid of me not to see them before. They are here—gardens full of flowers and the most umbrageous trees in the world."

It was clear from the rapt look in Althea's eyes that to her the gardens and hedges were really there. But it must be confessed that her companion departed from the truth.

"We have gone back nearly three hundred years," said Althea, "we are in the year 1600 and in Queen Elizabeth's reign. That, of course, you can see for yourself, by the way that the people are dressed."

"Of course one recognises the costume." Laurence looked about him critically. "It is picturesque. I think I have never seen it before off the stage."

"We are ghosts: we wander unseen among them: we can talk and they will not hear us: we can watch them but they will not notice us. Oh! we shall have the most delightful walk. I have often and often been

among them before, but always alone. It is stupid not to have anyone to talk with on such a walk, is it not?"

"Do you never talk with the people?"

"No," she replied, as gravely as a child pretending; "I am invisible, you know. Let us begin. See, now, this is Love Lane."

Laurence looked down a dark passage with high buildings on either side, so narrow that there was hardly room for two men to pass each other.

"There is always a Love Lane or a Lovers' Walk in every place where there are open fields near a town. You are very lucky to visit the place in June. See how bright the hedge is with the wild roses: and look at the flowers above the ditch. It is pleasant to walk along this lane in nearly all weathers, except the depth of winter: but especially, now, in the early summer, and at evening, when the people on the Bank are beginning to be noisy over their cups and their songs. Listen! you can hear them tinkling their guitars. Some of them play and sing very sweetly—their songs are all about love and Venus—but you know they are mostly players and poets, and they drink and sing and quarrel every evening. Only a little while ago—five or six years now—they killed poor Christopher Marlow in a tavern brawl—you remember Christopher Marlow?"

"Perfectly. Perfectly."

"I have often seen him on the Bank. He was a handsome man not yet thirty, but he drank too much wine and he showed at times a wild and disordered countenance. I used to meet him when I was a little girl, and before that fatal quarrel, in these very lanes.

He would walk along tossing his arms and spouting his splendid verses, thinking that he was all alone, because of course he could not tell that a girl of the nineteenth century was watching, could he?"

"Naturally he could not."

"Then they killed him. I was very sorry. They ought to have buried him in St. Saviour's where so many of his old friends were to lie, but instead of that, they took him all the way to St. Nicholas', Deptford—I have always thought it such a pity that our own Church could not have the keeping of his remains."

"So have I," said Laurence.

"Behind us are the Falcon stairs and the Falcon Inn. Very good company used to land at those stairs and take a cup at the Inn on their way to Paris Gardens—great Lords and foreign ambassadors in their state barges. Those are the Paris Gardens over the hedge—Love Lane runs along the West side of the gardens. Formerly there were many rustic walks among the trees, but since they have kept the bears here and since the Lord Mayor has sent his hounds to the place and the London butchers have brought their offal here, the gardens are no longer pleasant for the citizens. The walks are overgrown and the flower beds and lawns are neglected. And that is why the trees are grown so thick that you can see nothing through the branches. We will not go into the gardens to-day, I think. What with the baiting of the bears and the bulls and the horses, there is generally such a rabble as would disgust you."

"No," said Laurence. "Bears and bulls are rough

company for ladies. I will go alone some other time. Let us go on."

They went to the end of Willow Lane and turned into Holland Street.

"If we were not in Queen Elizabeth's time," said Althea regretfully, when they came opposite to the court of Hopton's Almshouses, "I could show you a most interesting almshouse here. But of course it isn't yet built. In the time of Queen Elizabeth there were not many almshouses. I could also show you Zoar Street where John Bunyan preached—but he has yet to be born. At present, you see, all is garden and wood. You are wondering, perhaps, to see so many ponds about. It is a great place for ponds and streams. The reason is that this part lies low: if it were not for the Bank it would be under water every high tide. I suppose that is also the reason why there is so much fever and ague about the place always. But here—here"—she turned into one of the meanest, dirtiest, ugliest streets possible to conceive—"here we are at last really on the most classic ground in the whole of London. This, Mr. Waller, is, I assure you, none other than Maiden Lane!"

Laurence observed from the legend on the corner house that they had changed the name, but as his guide looked so triumphant he tried to look as if he understood all the glories of Maiden Lane.

"The modern houses have quite, quite vanished, have they not?" asked Althea, watching her companion's face with some anxiety. In fact, his eyes were palpably, obviously, considering the present appearance and the inhabitants of the street—which is

now re-christened by order of some barbarian, and called Park Street. It is narrow and squalid: the houses are mean and dirty: the shops are those which belong to a very poor quarter: and there is continually, day and night, floating on the air, a thick, invisible cloud of smell. I know not how high it rises overhead, but at the elevation of five feet seven, where Laurence first struck it, the smell was as strong as Alcides, and as penetrating as the dart of Cupid. Laurence gasped, choked, and rushed through this bank of fragrance before he replied.

"Yes—yes—they have all quite vanished, I assure you. At that moment—when you spoke—there were, it is true, a few ghosts—mere shadows—of houses: and there seemed—perhaps my fancy—to be the faint ghost of a smell—very odd thing: I never met, before, with the ghost of a smell—fried fish it was—fish fried in oil—fish not quite fresh dipped in oil rather turned and then imperfectly fried—a very odd ghost." Althea listened with some impatience. Such ghosts troubled her not: she was used to them. "All gone now, Miss Indagine—even the ghost of the rag and bone shop, with the old woman, all rags and bones herself, in front. Nothing now but gardens and hedges and wild flowers and the—the—oh! Lord! that fried fish!—the sweetest fragrance from the wild roses and the honeysuckle. It is a balmy air. Only to breathe it is sufficient."

"We are in Poet and Player Land," said Althea, apparently satisfied. "Some of the Poets and the Players lived on the Bank: they all came here to the Bank to sing and drink wine and smoke tobacco. But in these leafy lanes they walked together and held

serious converse: they were not always drinking, you know. Here you may meet Shakespeare and Ben Jonson together. Beaumont comes here very often: he is a very fine gentleman who dresses like a courtier: and here walked Massinger and Ford: and I have seen Edmund Spenser here, but he is now dead. In the summer, when the theatres are open and the Bear Garden, the lanes are filled with people who have come across the river to see the play and the baiting: but indeed you can hear them."

"It is indeed a beautiful place to walk in," said Laurence, doubtfully, because he thought he saw another ghost of a fried-fish shop a few doors ahead.

"Of course," said Althea, "this is the best time of the year for the lanes. In winter it is impossible to walk here for the mud. Besides, there is then almost always a white mist hanging over the place, and it is said to cause ague. This little cut across the fields is called Bandy Leg path. I know not why. This"—they were now at the end of the street where she herself lived—"is a way through the gardens to the riverside. Some day, perhaps,"—it was indeed a remarkable prophecy—"this path and all the lanes may be covered with mean buildings. Don't forget, pray, Mr. Waller"—for Laurence again showed a disposition to consider the houses—"that we are in the year 1600. You are only a Ghost of the Future."

"Yes, yes, I remember—only a Ghost of the Future. It is a great power to be able to wander in the Past—mere Ghosts of the Future. How I pity those unfortunates who have to remain among the Present in the Flesh!" At that moment the Doctor emerged from

the house and walked hastily up the street. But Althea seemed not to see him.

"Do you hear the drums and the trumpets?" she asked. "What a noise! Why cannot they carry on their show without such a clamour? They are going to bait the bear in the new house — not in Paris Gardens. Look, there are Burleigh and Alleyne the players: and Henslowe with a great Lord. Look at his silk cloak embroidered with pearls. Let us follow." She turned out of Maiden Lane into a narrow little street leading to the Bank. Halfway down the street widened into a tiny square with a tavern in one corner. "This is the entrance to the new Bear Garden," she said. "It is the Hope Theatre as well. The Tavern is full of people drinking. Well, they will destroy and build over the Bear Garden, but the Tavern will remain. You don't want to see the baiting, do you?"

"No, unless you wish it."

"Certainly not. It is a terribly noisy scene, and the men use horrid oaths. Besides, I have another surprise for you. You have heard of the Rose Theatre, of course?"

"Oh, yes! The Rose, of course."

"There it is." She pointed down another alley narrow and dark, parallel with the street of the Bear Garden.

"Oh! This is the Rose Theatre, is it?" Laurence gazed with interest at the wall of a warehouse. "I never—do you know?—expected to look upon the Rose Theatre."

"A little farther down I can show you something even more interesting."

Just here the street passed under the arches of Southwark Bridge, but the Vision of the leafy lane remained in Althea's eyes. A little beyond the Bridge begins the wall of the great Brewery. Althea stopped before this wall.

"There," she said, "is the Globe Theatre. It was only opened a year or two ago. Half a dozen of Shakespeare's plays have been already brought out here. It is the best and largest of all the Theatres. The old Swan in Paris Gardens is pulled down, I believe; but, as I told you, one cannot walk in those gardens any more, and I have not yet seen either the Curtain at Shoreditch, or the Theatre in the ruins of Blackfriars, or the Fortune at Cripple-gate. The play they have acted to-day is the 'Midsummer Night's Dream.' It is a pity that we are too late for the performance."

"It is a finely-proportioned house," said Laurence, with the docility of the One-eyed Calendar.

"Yes. Pity to think," said Althea, "that this Theatre, which ought to be kept sacred to all time, will be presently deserted and the place left to itself for two hundred years. Then they will build Barclay and Perkins' Brewery upon it."

"Barclay and Perkins!" cried Laurence, with more animation than he had shown for the Bear Garden or the Rose. "Is this Barclay and Perkins'?"

"Oh! Mr. Waller! I thought the houses had all vanished."

"But you brought them back, you know, by talking of Barclay and Perkins."

"Well, let us leave off pretending. Have I made you understand a little where the old theatres stood?"

"I am ashamed of myself, Miss Indagine, for making believe so badly. But I do understand something, thank you."

"Then for the rest of our walk we will be moderns again. This street"—it was that into which Maiden Lane ended—"used to be called Deadman's Place. There ought, properly, to be a legend about it—a murder and a ghost—and people should be afraid to walk alone in it at night: but now they have quite forgotten the story, even if ever there was one. This corner house is the place where the old Clink Prison stood—the Prison of the Liberty of the Clink—many a poor player has been laid by the heels in this prison for brawling. It still looks gloomy, though it is only a warehouse now; and this narrow street—Clink Street—was once a lane running along the north of Winchester House, the Bishop's Palace."

At the end of the street they came upon the river and upon the queerest little dock that was ever seen, with just room enough for a barge to float in it.

"This is St. Mary Overies' Dock," said Althea. "It was made long ago for the brethren of the Priory. Perhaps, even, for the sisters of the old House founded by the Lady Mary long, long ago, even before London Bridge was built. They had a chapel here and looked after the Ferry. Very likely this Dock was one end of the Ferry. The Sisters were followed by a college of Priests, who built a timber bridge. And then came two Norman knights, named Pont de l'Arche and Dauncey, who founded the Priory. The monks kept

their barge of state laid up in this Dock, and the barges for the carriage of their wine and provisions put in here. The monastery stood here, at the back of the great church where are now nothing but warehouses. But only a few years ago there were still ruins left."

By this time the Shakespearian vision had quite departed, and Althea was back again in the present day. She led her companion by another lane to the open space before the church. By a happy accident the doors were open and they went within.

It is wonderful to think of this great and splendid church lying buried and almost forgotten at the foot of London Bridge. They pulled down quite needlessly the stout old walls of the ruined nave, and they built up a Thing of ugliness and meanness in its place: they destroyed the Bishop's Chapel and would have destroyed the Lady Chapel as well, but they were prevented by the courage of one man. There are a hundred thousand who daily cross the Bridge and look down upon the church: from all the trains between Charing Cross and Cannon Street the passengers can look upon the Tower: yet, the whole day long, this splendid Chancel is quiet, untrodden by the feet of strangers, save by a few Americans who come over the river to see the place where the poets and players lie buried and where the martyrs were brought to hear their sentence, which was always that of death through the Gate of Fire. Why, even in the church itself, a glass screen divides the new nave from the Transept, and the scanty congregation know nothing of the glories of their old church.

Althea knew its history and all its monuments, and

showed them, reading the inscriptions through like a conscientious Cicerone: the tomb of John Gower: the figure of the Templar, doubtless Pont de l'Arche himself: the figure of Lancelot Andrewes—father of all those who would read Mass for Morning Prayer: the names of Fletcher, Massinger, and Edmund Spenser carved in the stones of the chancel: the stalwart form of the King James's Gentleman Porter: the recumbent Doctor, inventor of the Pill which cured most diseases and prevented all the rest—he is represented—nay, photographed—in the great suffering caused by taking one of his own Pills an hour or two before his demise: and the monument of Mr. Richard Humble, with the pretty lines,—

> Like to the damask rose you see,
> Or like the blossoms on the tree,
> Or like the dainty flowers of May,
> Or like the morning of the day,
> Or like the sun, or like the shade,
> Or like the gourd which Jonas had,
> Even so is Man whose thread is spun,
> Drawn out and cut and so is done.

"Are you tired?" Althea asked when they came out. "Have you seen enough?"

"How can one ever be tired, with such a guide? You have taught me more in an hour than I could have learned in a month from the books. And all this——" he looked at Althea as he spoke, but perhaps he had the old sites in his mind—"all this—on Bank Side."

"My father has got a collection of the old dramatists," said Althea. "By reading them and his books about

London, of which he has a great many, it is easy to make out all these associations. If you like, I will take you, another day, into the City, where there are still a great many things to see, though none more interesting than these."

"Let us go. Let us be ghosts again. I like being a ghost—in company. To be a ghost by oneself must be lonesome. Let us go somewhere else to-morrow."

"For to-day," said Althea, "you shall not be a ghost any more. Another day—perhaps. Oh! there is a great deal more to see on this side of the river. There are the old Inns, but they can wait: there is Guy's Hospital: there is St. Olave's: there are Bermondsey, and Rotherhithe, and Deptford, and Greenwich—oh! quantities of places full of wonderful things—to those who can shut their eyes. But to-day I am going to show you only one more thing—very different from Poet and Player Land, if you will come with me."

"I will go with you cheerfully, Miss Indagine, even to the South Pole."

She took him up the stairs to the main street and turned southwards, and her face, which was as changeable as a field of golden corn in a day of cloud and wind, became strangely sad and grave.

"When I first read 'Little Dorrit,'" she went on, breaking out in an unexpected place—from Shakespeare to "Little Dorrit" is a considerable jump—"I understood the book far better than most people could. I am going to tell you why. Let me show you, first, all that is left of the place where Mr. Dorrit lived so long. When I read that book it was not of the girl I thought—the girl who was born in the Marshalsea and

went in and out every day—it was of a boy who came to see his father and to watch the prisoners—a boy with bright eyes. See, this is the Marshalsea—all that is left of it."

She led the way down a filthy and narrow passage to a paved court. A row of houses stood back to back: there were iron railings guarding a gateway and a gate-house: the iron railings stood open and the gate was gone. Within, was another broad paved court with a high wall on one side. The upper windows looked out upon a churchyard with trees in it.

"This is the place," said Althea. Laurence observed that for the actual place, the slattern women, the dirty children, the houses with their open doors, the bits of things drying after the wash—she had no eyes. She knew how to shut them. "Here Mr. Dorrit lived. His room, I am certain, was up there, the second house from the end, where the windows command the best view of the trees in the churchyard. Two years ago I could have shown you the rest of the Prison: there was the old White Lyon, the ancient county Prison, what they used to call the Surrey Clink, still standing with its little exercise yard and its two great rooms—a real prison. But it is now all pulled down and built over. Don't you hear the chatter of the idle prisoners? Can't you see the boy—his name was Charles Dickens —looking and listening and forgetting nothing? Come away. It is dreadful to be here."

They left the place of gloomy memories and walked a little way farther down the street. Presently Althea stopped and pointed to certain blocks of comparatively new houses across the road.

"Those new houses and streets," she said, "cover the site of the old Queen's Bench Prison. It has not been pulled down very long. Oh! I am glad it is gone. I am glad to think there is nothing left of it to preserve its memory. I hope it will be clean forgotten." She spoke with more vehemence than was appropriate to a mere abstract dislike of a Prison. "It is a hateful, dreadful place. Now I will tell you why I understood 'Little Dorrit' so well. It is because my father passed his boyhood in this Prison. All that I read in that book, and more, I have heard from my father about this vile and wicked place. His father, my grandfather, died in that prison. There were three of them—my grandfather and his two boys; one of them, the younger, Æneas—a very little boy. My grandmother was dead. They were horribly poor, and their long poverty and the shame of the prison—it is a dreadful thing for a boy to have to confess that his father died in prison—and the sights and sounds of the place sank so deep into my father's heart that he has never forgotten them —or the man who caused all this suffering."

"I knew something of this," said Laurence.

"How did you know? Did Cassie tell you? Never mind. You think, Mr. Waller, that my father is absurdly sensitive; you wonder that a man should leave his friends and give up his work and retire to such a seclusion as Bank Side, all because he received a harsh and unjust criticism. But remember the poverty and the degradation of his boyhood passed in this prison. How he got educated at all I know not, because I cannot bear that his thoughts should ever be turned to that miserable time. This it was which made him

morbidly sensitive. He always remained afraid of the world. Some men do not seem to care a bit for the world: it never terrifies them. To my father the world seemed always so terribly strong: this came, perhaps, from living among men whom the world had crushed. I brought you here, Mr. Waller," she added, looking up to him with her frank, clear eyes, "because I wanted you to know exactly what happened to my father: I thought you would then make allowance for—for what you think is too sensitive in his character. I wanted this the more because my father likes you so much and because you may perhaps lead him a little out of his retirement. You know that you are the only man who has ever read and loved his poems."

Laurence blushed, but made no reply.

They began to retrace their steps in silence. But Althea stopped before a great modern church in the High Street. Of the thousands who pass this church every day I wonder how many pay it any heed or know aught concerning it. Even St. Saviour's is better known.

"I must show you," she said, "the strangest churchyard in London. This is St. George's—the oldest Church in the Borough of Southwark. It is older than St. Saviour's, though the building is quite modern. This was a place of sanctuary, formerly. Southwark Fair used to be held here. But it is the churchyard that I want you to see. Let us go in. This is the burial-place of all the poor prisoners who died, during hundreds of years, in the Marshalsea and the Queen's Bench and the old White Lyon. Bishop Bonner is buried here: here are lords and great men as well as

the humble and unknown who have died in the prisons and were brought here when—when the Lord granted their discharge. The poor prisoners! The place, before they left off burying here, was crammed with dead men's bones. The people in the Marshalsea—that is Mr. Dorrit's window above the wall—must have heard the knell ringing and watched the funerals going on every day. I don't think Little Dorrit noticed them very much. Oh! if one could only write a history of St. George's Churchyard—but the very names of the prisoners are long since forgotten—and their unjust sufferings and the punishment for their sins—all gone out of men's minds. Among the company of the dead prisoners, Mr. Waller, lies my grandfather."

The churchyard of St. George's, like most of the London churchyards, has been turned into a public garden. They have cleared away the headstones and removed them to serve as a kind of lining to the walls, where they are neatly arranged in a row, so that no dead man shall be able to grumble or to complain that he has been forgotten before the letters of his name have had time to wear themselves out. Nay, so great has been this zeal to prolong the memory of the oldest inhabitant of the yard, that even the headstones where nothing at all, neither name nor date, can be any more made out, have also been preserved with the rest. But as for the exact spot where anyone lies buried, that is clean forgotten and can never more be learned. Two or three of the more magnificent tombs have been left *in situ*. The ground, which is in shape what Euclid calls a gnomon, is laid out in flower-beds and shrubberies: there are wooden benches for the convenience

of those old people who come here when the sun shines, to repose and meditate: the children drive their hoops —in hoop time—which is late autumn—about the paths.

This afternoon many old people were on the seats: some of them in the tasty uniform of the Union: the garden was in its fairest summer beauty: the leaves showed still their first bright green: the flower-beds were gay with annuals: some of the shrubs were in flower.

"It looks a pretty garden now," said Althea. "But its beauty lasts a very little while. The leaves fall off in September, and are swept up and carried away. Just now it looks too bright and happy for the burial-place of the poor prisoners. But come here in November when the leaves are all gone, and you will see nothing but black earth, black boughs, black trunks, and head-stones which can no longer be read; and then you will remember who lie buried here. The Dorrits had no flower garden to look into: only a crowded churchyard covered with neglected graves and—I always think so —broken bottles. At this spot, at my feet, was buried my grandfather, Sylvester Indagine. And over there, against the wall, is his headstone. I keep it clean and scrape the black moss out of the letters. I really do think that his is the only stone which is still cared for."

Laurence stepped across and read, "In Memory of Sylvester Indagine, who died April 5th, 1842, in the Queen's Bench Prison. May the next world be kinder to him than this!"

"My father comes here sometimes, but not often,

because the sight of the stone recalls the old time and revives the old bitterness. You spoke the other day, Mr. Waller, of Mr. Norbery. Never mention that name to my father again. It was Mr. Norbery who caused the ruin of my grandfather. First, he made him sell his property to himself, just before the new railway increased its value enormously: then he robbed him, somehow, of the purchase money: then, because there was still some chance of getting more money out of him, this greedy money-grubber threw him into prison and kept him there—until he died. The prisoner died cursing the name of Norbery. But he lived on and prospered for forty years and longer afterwards. If all the curses laid upon the head of Mr. Norbery had taken effect, I know not what would have happened to him. Now, Mr. Waller, I will show you no more today. You came from Australia to see London, did you not? Well—this is a piece of London which I think that Australians very seldom do see. Let us go home."

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE RESULT OF AN EXPERIMENT.

By five o'clock in the afternoon most of the students in the Physical Laboratory had put away their work and gone home. One cannot, I believe, successfully conduct a Research for more than six hours a day. Two or three were left, standing each at his own table, his own jet of gas, his tubes, his blow-pipes, and his scales beside him. The Demonstrator, who had all day long been assisting and advising the others, now stood idle, his hands in his pockets, either tired or a-thinking. The place was quiet—a physical laboratory can never be noisy—although, outside, the city was still at high tide of work and activity. Gresham College, as everybody knows, is the old college recently converted to ways of modern usefulness: and the Demonstrator to the Professor of Physics was none other than Mr. Oliver Luttrel, B.A. London, Ph.D. Heidelberg, and F.R.S. Yes, although he was as yet no more than six or seven and twenty, for original work that he had done, important papers that he had written, and wonderful discoveries that he had made, this fortunate young man had already been received into that Royal Fellowship and was entitled to use after his name those three letters —the possesion of which is the ambition of every worker in the field of science who respects himself. In the language of the Craft, he had already "done something" —strange that these words in other circles should bear

a meaning so widely different!—and he was expected to do a great deal more. Now a young man who is already a Fellow of the Royal Society, and is Demonstrator to one of the first men of the day, and has his work in London, is supposed to have the ball at his feet, even though his salary be no more than 150*l.* a year. What matters the salary? He has enough to live upon: he has a splendid Laboratory in which to work, filled with all the newest machinery: he is always in the centre and heart of everything that goes on: he gets to know everybody: he hears of everything: he is sure of getting a good post in time:—such a man among those who follow science is counted worthy of envy. Whether, as the Doctor of Bank Side prophesied, this young man will become President of the Royal Society is a point which may be left open for time to show. It was an old woman who first made the sagacious remark that Time would show—I believe that all the really valuable remarks on the Conduct of Life have been made by old women. The men receive them and appropriate them: work them up into proverbs: illustrate them by fables: spin them out into poems, plays, and novels: call them their own. But they really belong to old women. Think of the profound wisdom of that ancient lady who first calmed the passions, soothed the fears, curbed the impatience, and cheered the despair of her grandchildren with the startling discovery that Time would show.

The Demonstrator, after looking round mechanically as if to see that no one was in difficulties, walked slowly and thoughtfully down the students' room. It was a long room, narrow and lofty; provided with a

great number of tables, each for one student to work at undisturbed. At the end of this room was the Lecture Hall, a large square room with a platform for the lecturer, a great electric Battery, a blackboard, and a vast table covered with bottles, cylinders, tubes, and all manner of machines. Two doors, one on either side, led to two rooms. One of them was the private room of the Professor; the other that of the Demonstrator. The latter room, into which Oliver turned, was provided with a table at the window covered with papers, proofs, and letters, and fitted with drawers. Another table stood in the middle of the room on which were instruments of all kinds—delicate scales under glass, thermometers in wooden tubes, discs of glass, blow-pipes, gas jets, retorts, and strange instruments, the uses and names of which are unknown outside the trade.

The Demonstrator took a chair at the former table and sat down. But he did not immediately snatch a pen and begin to work. His papers were ready for him on the blotting-pad, but he regarded them not. His thoughts were outside his laboratory and beyond the world of science. In his hand he held two notes which he kept on reading over and over again, but mechanically and without paying any heed, for his thoughts were not with the letters nor with the writers of them. Yet he continued to read them—everybody knows how a simple mechanical trick, such as this, may sometimes assist the mind in a time of doubt or difficulty.

The first note was very short. It was written in a sprawling, half-taught hand, and the spelling was

lamentable. Let us not expose the weaknesses of a lady.

"Dear Oliver,—Come to supper this evening after the Theatre. Harry will be here, and there will be nobody else except the old lady. Your affectionate sister,

"JULIA."

The second, over which he had perhaps shed tears till there were none left—for he shed none now—was longer and pitiful.

"Dear Oliver,—Oh! how can you ever be anything but dear to me after all that has passed? You did love me six months ago. I could not be mistaken—and oh! how happy it made me only to see the love in your eyes and to feel the touch of your hand! You love me no longer: you have forgotten the words you said and swore. You have told me that it is all over: and you ask for your letters back again. I will never give you your letters back. As for the ring you gave me, it hangs about my neck, and it shall hang there all my life. It is harder for a girl to forget than for a man. You taught me to love you. Oh, you made me love you! I did not ask for your love. You gave it to me. For six months I have thought of you all day and all night. I cannot tear you out of my heart—and I will not. You shall live there always, whatever happens, and whatever you do. No one knows, and no one suspects, and I shall tell no one—not even Althea. So you can come and go as if nothing had happened.

"CASSIE."

He read the letters one after the other. Then he put them down. Then he took them up and read them again. But as for his thoughts—it is impossible to translate into words the thoughts of a man, even the most stupid of men. They are lit up by so many side lights, flashes, and breadths of sunshine: they are so varied with shadow and with colour: they flow like a stream with so many twists, turns, waterfalls, rapids, backwaters, lashers, and broads, that it is impossible to do more than to indicate their tenor. Somewhat after this manner, however, the young man was thinking:—

"On his first stay—the first morning he goes to Joe Mayes and tries to find out about old Norbery. Pretends not to know that he was dead. Asks after a will. Says there was a will. Who is he? How should he know out in Australia?—who told him? Was there really a will? He doesn't look like a lawyer's clerk. On his first visit at home he asks Uncle Clement what he knows about old Norbery. Who is he then? Althea says he has come all the way to gaze upon the heavenly poet. Ho! Very likely, indeed! To gaze upon the Bard. Mayes says he remembers signing a will—but he does not know its contents or what became of it, and he has forgotten how long ago it was. How should anyone in Australia know of that will? The other witness was Backler's chief clerk—who is dead. And Backler is dead. If no one here except Mayes—who says he never spoke about it—knew that there was such a will, how should it be known in Australia? Why does he go and take lodgings at the Cottles'? Who is he? Who is he?"

He unlocked a drawer and drew out certain papers

covered with notes, one of which he sat considering. "Why not?" he said. "Althea ought to have it all. Even if her father will not claim his rights. It should be hers—and mine."

The sound of a manly footstep outside disturbed him. He pushed the paper back into the drawer, with the two letters, and rose from his chair to greet his visitor, who was none other than the Australian of whom he had been thinking.

"Glad to welcome you in my den," he said, with a hand-shake and a smile of the friendliest. "I thought you would like perhaps to see our newest Physical Laboratory—I believe we are very complete."

"There," he said presently, "I think I have nothing more to show you. Perhaps you have a place in Sydney as well appointed as this. All the great cities of the world are becoming alike, just as all European hotels are alike. But you have not got our Professor," he added with loyalty.

"I don't know much about Laboratories," said Laurence. "But in Sydney we like to think that we have the best of everything. Perhaps we deceive ourselves."

They had come back to the Demonstrator's private room by this time. Oliver offered his visitor a cigarette-case and took a cigarette himself. Then he leaned back in his chair, tilting it up, and watching the wreaths of smoke.

"How do you like Bank Side?" he asked carelessly.

"Very much. I am greatly interested in Bank Side."

"You will go down to posterity, my uncle Clement thinks, as the pilgrim who came all the way from Australia to gaze upon him."

Laurence laughed. "That is not a strictly correct way of putting it. I did, however, ask for an introduction to the poet. Remember that in Australia we do not often get the chance of meeting a poet."

"Come now," said Oliver sharply. "Frankly, have you read a line of his poetry? Do you know anybody who has? Did you ever hear of his poetry before you came here?"

"Frankly, no. I have never seen or heard of his verses. But if he thinks I have, why disturb that belief? I did not deceive him, and I shall not undeceive him."

"Humph! But you had heard of him before in reference to other matters?"

"Certainly, I had heard of him before, and of other people on Bank Side. That is why I am here. Come, Luttrel, I have seen the question in your eyes a dozen times. They look at me and they say 'Who the devil are you?'"

"Is it not natural? I find you installed at my father's house—*ami de famille.*"

"Perfectly natural. I am the son of Sir David Waller, K.C.M.G., Premier, unless he has been kicked out since I left, of the Government of New South Wales. I am over here on a holiday for myself and on certain private business for my father. And I have been asked to ascertain, while I am here, the present

circumstances of certain people, including Mr. Clement Indagine."

"I see. You will pardon the offensive curiosity of one not wholly uninterested in those people, I am sure. My father and my uncle are a pair of hermits. Althea is a hermit. They have never once, until your arrival, had a stranger within their gates. As for society at Bank Side, there is none. There is a clergyman or two—and there are, I suppose, a few doctors—six-penny doctors. Well: they have taken a great liking to you—because you listen to their talk."

"As for the talk, I assure you that I find it delightful."

"Very good of you to say so. Perhaps it may be interesting at first to a stranger. As for myself I find it dull. It is the talk of thirty years ago. I would as soon read the Quarterly Reviews of the same date. Do you know what is the most deadly reading in the world? It is the day before yesterday's leading article. Very well—the talk at Bank Side is the talk of the last generation—which corresponds. Good Heavens! There is not a single point on which in thirty years we have not completety changed—and those two still love the old worn-out shibboleths and believe in the old worn-out doctrines. Yet, to you, no doubt it is interesting—at first."

"Very interesting indeed."

"My father, you see, held these old-fashioned notions and thought he could do nothing better with himself than buy a practice—such as it is—among the poor, and live for them. Well: he has lived for them: they send for him at all hours of the day and

night, they never leave him for a couple of hours to himself. He is over sixty years of age: the poor have had the whole of his life: whether they are any the better for it I don't know: but they have had it, and so far as he himself is concerned, he has given himself away."

Laurence at this point was by some unseen force violently snatched away. He was on Bank Side in the evening, and he was walking with the Doctor, who was speaking with enthusiasm.

"I left my son, Sir," he was saying, "to work out for himself his own creed, his theories, and his convictions. He has been brought up without dogma, without illusions, but without contempt for those who hold this or that opinion. I have watched his mind expanding and feeding on the facts and laws of Nature. He has now reached the point when he has begun to understand the true Brotherhood of mankind, and the dependence of man upon man. Then he will proceed to the next grand lesson of life, that he who would save it must throw it away. He only truly lives who lives for others. Thus he will climb to the highest level of all—and understand the Christ. To learn step by step for himself is better than all the dogmas of the Sorbonne."

Laurence in imagination heard these words a second time with a kind of pity. How would the Doctor be undeceived! Then his mind came back to the Laboratory. Oliver was talking—what had he said? But Laurence was only away in spirit for a brief moment.

"They still talk that kind of thing, I believe," he was saying, "but it has lost power except over a few

enthusiasts. Formerly, the world was inclined to believe it. We are all Socialists now, of different kinds, and we go for first principles and laws of nature. For instance, most of us recognise the broad bottom fact that every man lives for himself. Some of the Socialists go on to demand an equal share of everything—most illogically. We want, on the other hand, a clear field for the fight, and for every man to get what he can."

"Oh!" This was indeed to be at the point of recognising the beauty of sacrifice.

"They used," continued the Philosopher, "to believe in a Gospel of Supply and Demand, which was a very fine religion for capitalists, and made them grow rich with easy consciences. We are substituting the law by which the spoils go to the strong."

"And is there to be no living for other people at all?"

"My dear Sir," Oliver said with amiable pity, "let us not talk vague sentiment. Come back to the hard facts—to the Laws of Nature. We cannot possibly get outside them, try as much as we please. Very well. Nature speaks to the Individual, not to the Community. She says, 'Thou shalt eat.' She doesn't say, 'Thou shalt eat for thy neighbour.' Not at all. Every man has got to eat for himself. Eating is a perfectly individual duty—for purely selfish purposes. That simple law is the foundation of private property, individualism, and everything."

"According to that, the more we civilise the world, the more we develope the individual."

"Quite so. To civilise a man is to create more

wants: that is, to increase his appetite and his ravening. The more he desires to get things, the fiercer, the more resolute, the more unscrupulous he will be to get them. Humanity, as it gets more civilised, will become more and more a battle-ground for the strong, and a Hell for the weak. Don't you like the prospect? If you are strong it will be a very pleasant life indeed, especially after you have fought your way up."

The Philosopher took up a skull which stood on the table and turned it over in his hands. On the forehead someone had written in pencil—"Eritis sicut Deus."

"Here is your man," he said. "This is his brain-pot. Whatever you do to this creature, he remains Man. He is Man who wants: Man who takes: Man who fights. Civilise him. Then, I say, he will want more, and he will fight the harder. What? Would you not fight to the death rather than go to live in an Irish cabin in rags and filth, on potatoes and bad whisky? You think you would rather die. But then you would not die if by killing your neighbour you could get what you want." His eyes flashed for a moment. "No—not if that alone would give it to you. Man must always trample on Man. That is the Law of Nature."

"It seems a poor show for the future."

"Not quite what we expected—eh? Not what we have been taught to expect, is it? Well: the good old bourgeois teaching is pretty well played out, I think. We are marching rapidly to the stage where there will be left no illusions. People will no longer, for instance, be persuaded that the wrongs of this world are going to be righted in the next: they will therefore want them

righted now. As for the modern illusions about man's rights and man's equality—they will be given up, too. There is no equality, and nobody has got any rights. We shall openly educate the boys for the battle where the spoils go to the strongest. I like the contemplation of that time, for my own part. No privilege of rank—no inheritance: no rights for anybody. A free and fair fight and no favour. It will be a splendid time for the strong man."

"Is there any place for pity for the weak?"

"In the long run—none. The last illusions to be thrown away will be the illusions of pity and of love. The highest development of civilisation will be a supreme individualism: it will be a return to savage times, with the addition of all the modern wants and the modern science."

"And what will happen then?"

"I do not know"—Oliver laughed a low, musical laugh—"I do not know. It will be a very fine world, that is certain. Only the strongest allowed to live, unless — which may come — we breed a race of slaves intellectually and physically inferior. An interesting world! A really interesting world! Full of curious things!"

"No honour, no religion, no morality, no pity, no love?"

"My friend, no illusions. That sums up the situation. This seems to me the tendency of modern things."

"I came to see a Laboratory," said Laurence, laughing, "and I learn a lesson on the New Political Economy."

"Not a published Economy. Pray understand me:

I see, or think I see, the current beginning to flow in a certain direction. It is interesting to consider what may happen. That is all. As for me, I am a man of science, and I have no interest in any Political Economy."

It was as if he felt that he had said too much.

"Well," said Laurence, "I am interested in both your Laboratory and your lecture. Thanks for both. We shall meet at Bank Side—perhaps to-night? No! I don't intend to believe, you know," he said laughing, "that any of the old illusions are going to be given up."

"Not given up. They are slowly vanishing, like the mists at sunrise. We shall stand in the clear light and see ourselves, as we are." He laid his hand, perhaps by accident, on the skull again. "*Au revoir.* At Bank Side, or elsewhere for choice."

"He knows something that he won't tell," Oliver murmured as his visitor closed the door. "Does he know what I only found out a week ago?"

He took an envelope out of his pocket-book. It was old and stained. "I found it," he said, "in an old desk. I wonder I never found it before." He opened the letter in it and read:—

"Dear Bob,—I have got here safe. I don't know, yet, what I shall do or where I shall go. They tell me that the best thing I can do is to make for the West where new towns are springing up and there's a chance for a fellow. I've got enough money to last for two or three months. Out in a Western town, I may be editor, lawyer, land surveyor, doctor—anything I please. If

my uncle Sam Norbery makes a certain discovery and carries on about it, please tell Clem that I couldn't go away without doing something to make him in a rage. After all, it is nothing that can do anybody any harm. Keep Clem out of my uncle's clutches. Ugh! what claws he has! I wonder if he would have been so hard upon us if my mother had lived. The memory of his sister was of no avail, so perhaps her living presence would have done nothing. Write to me.

"Yours ever,

"ÆNEAS INDAGINE."

"His nephew! Clement is old Sam Norbery's nephew. And no will! And he knows by this time that the old man is dead, and yet he makes no sign. He is capable of anything—the two together are even capable of leaving all that money unclaimed. And all—all—would go to Althea. I wonder what this fellow Waller knows and what is his business! Well, let us think: let us think. A world without illusions: every man for himself: for the man of resource a most interesting world, full of strange projects and crafty enterprises. A very interesting world indeed." His eye fell on Cassie's note. "No illusions, my poor Cassie: not even the illusion of love! Recent discoveries have destroyed that illusion."

Laurence walked slowly away. Outside, in the street, he looked about him. The City was the battlefield: the men who hurried along the streets were the combatants. There was nothing, then, after all, but the fight for food first and for luxuries afterwards. There would never be anything else. All the rest was illusion.—He shuddered.

## CHAPTER V.

### AFTER THE THEATRE.

THE curtain at the Alhambra fell at eleven o'clock, or thereabouts, upon the final scene of the most gorgeous ballet ever put upon that stage. The central figure of the group was, of course, the lovely and accomplished Giulia Coroni, the most popular favourite that had ever appeared even upon those boards. She stood in the midst, surrounded by her attendant nymphs—I believe she was Diana, but perhaps she was Venus—all with gleaming arms and sparkling eyes and set smiles and tow wigs, and all bathed in the radiance of I know not how many coloured lamps. When, in obedience to the applause of the House, the curtain rose again for a minute, the *danseuse* stepped forward and bowed and smiled collectively and individually upon all her admirers. That is to say, she was a woman with black eyes so bright and so quick that every one of her thousand lovers caught a glance from her which he took as intended solely for himself. Youth is foolish: youth is credulous: youth knows not the word impossible: youth went home from the Alhambra with beating heart and cheeks aglow, thinking of those flashing eyes and that glance. This, though youth was penniless: this, though youth brandished the yard measure in Regent Street: this, though he guided the swift pen in the City: this, though by Granta's silver stream he meditated the Mathematic Muse for scholastic purposes:

this, though the white collar and the flopping felt were already made for his reverend brows. Youth, when he got home, sat down to write a love letter before he could go to bed. He offered his valuable hand and his valuable heart and promised to lay at the feet of the Goddess the whole of his future—the present—owing to ancestral prodigality—not being worth offering. This was the reason, and no other, why two postmen, instead of one, had to do the first morning round in Victoria Street. They were wanted to carry the love letters addressed to the Signora Giulia Coroni. She opened them all: if one contained, as sometimes happened, a ring or a bracelet, she smiled and kept it. The rest she threw into the fire. But she answered none of them.

Half an hour after the curtain fell she appeared at the stage door, where was formed, as usual, a lane of those young men who still openly worship Venus and come nightly to gaze upon the Goddesses in mufti whom they have just adored in their celestial dress. The glamour of the stage remains in the eyes of those worshippers for half an hour at least; wherefore, for the moment, the ladies who come forth from the stage door are as beautiful under the gaslight in their stuff frocks and shabby hats—or in their silks and sealskins —as when the electric light was turned upon them in their flaxen wigs and the sparkling bravery of their stage attire.

At the aspect of the illustrious Giulia, wrapped from head to foot in a soft grey mantle, the lane with one consent murmured aloud, as if the sight of so much loveliness, with the memory of that last group upon the

stage, simply compelled the voice of admiration. Thus Beauty, like Dentistry, or the worship of Baal, may cause man, natural man, to cry aloud. She walked with her shapely head thrown back, as if to let them see her face the better: the gaslight fell full upon her dark cheeks and jet-black hair and flashed in her black eyes. In that brief moment of transit she swept the crowd with her swift glance: she laughed in their faces, as if she rejoiced to think of the young men yearning for the impossible. So Circe laughed aloud at sight of her pigs. Yet each of these Transformations swinishly interpreted her contempt into selection and preference. Thus every one of these young men received the dancer's laughter as a gracious mark of favour meant for himself alone. When she got into her brougham, one young man stepped forward and, raising his hat, dropped into her lap a bouquet as beautiful and as large as, in the month of July, they are made. She laughed and nodded her head to him: the carriage drove away: and the fortunate donor of the bouquet, thus honoured by special recognition—he would have been torn to pieces by jealous rivals had he remained —vanished into the darkness. Let us be charitable to this lane of amorous youth. The worship of the actress is only the worship of Beauty in the abstract. All the virtues, all the graces, all the loveliness, all the charms of womanhood are concentrated in a creature inconceivably beautiful, dancing, smiling, posturing, acting, singing upon the stage. Let them worship their ideal. When, like Giulia Coroni, the Goddess is unapproachable, and always drives home alone in her brougham, no harm is done to anybody; and since in this case

the object of their worship really was a most beautiful woman, a truly lofty ideal of beauty and grace was nourished in the hearts of her adorers.

The Signora lived in a flat, one of those in Royalty Mansions, Victoria Street. She was the tenant of the first floor. The ground floor was occupied by an Irish Peer, who in these hard times cultivated the profession of Director and was doing tolerably well. On the second floor was an advertising stockbroker—one of those benevolent magicians who, for the paltry consideration of a "cover" of ten pounds, will make you the owner of a goodly, if not a princely, fortune, and then again—presto!—with a twirl of his wand will cause this beautiful pile to vanish away—"cover" and all. He and his friends always walked up and down the stairs as slowly as ever they possibly could in order to meet—if kind fortune should give them that chance—the divine Giulia. This event came off about once in four months, but when it happened it caused their hearts to glow with rapture ineffable. Sometimes, too, they met his Lordship. These gentlemen belonged to that class of City young men—I am told that it is now singularly small and daily diminishing—who love above all things the sight of an actress or a singer or a dancer off the stage: next to this, they love the sight of a Lord. The advertising broker, as is often the case with men who make an early success, had a large following of friends: they were bitterly jealous and envious of his good fortune, and behind his back remembered his præ-successful times, the obscurity of his father, the lowly condition of his cousins, the meagreness of his first beginning, and the time when he would have been thankful

to possess a spare half-sovereign. These reminiscences, which are the chief solace of the unsuccessful, did not in the least prevent them from drinking as much champagne, eating as many dinners and suppers, and having as gaudy a time at the expense of this Fortune's darling as he would stand. The money flowed in, and the money flowed out. Who would not be an advertising stockbroker to take their money from greedy gamblers and give it to his friends and to deserving tradesmen and virtuous showmen? As for the top of the house, it was inhabited by a journalist who never came home until the stockbroker's friends had gone, and never got up until the middle of the day when they were all in the City.

When the Signora arrived home, supper was already served and her supper party were waiting for her. The party consisted of two men only: one of them our friend Oliver Luttrel, and the other a tall and swarthy man, handsome, in his way, which was something in the light cavalry trooper style, or the circus rider style —he would have looked well in the costume of an Afghan warrior, or in the full dress of an Indian Rajah. He would also have made a good model for Jugurtha, or indeed Belteshazzar, or perhaps General Hamilcar. But in evening dress he was incomplete. Apart from his face and head, which were remarkable, there was nothing to distinguish him from his kind, or fellow-professors, who are always seen in evening dress when the shades of night prevail. It is now a part of the profession to put on evening dress—they may be seen every night in the lobbies and lounges of certain theatres. The evening dress which they wear is of the

most pronounced kind possible within the very limited range allowed. One would think that they wished to call attention to their aristocratic appearance and manners — beneath that costume what but the most unblemished honour could survive? The flower in the button-hole is as large and splendid as can be procured: the chains, rings, studs, and wrist-links are big and beautiful: the linen is snow-white and ample: the overcoat and hat are absolutely correct. They know a good many men who frequent the same haunts, just as their predecessors used certain taverns: they are sometimes alone and sometimes accompanied by young gentlemen from the country or from the colonies, to whom they communicate information of the most useful kind. Of course they are sometimes seen in morning dress, and then it is on racecourses. And I am told that there are now certain clubs whose members enjoy not only smoking concerts, dances, dramatic recitals, and the handling of the gloves, but a little nap, baccarat, or piquet, in quiet card rooms. Formerly, the word Pigeon would have occurred to the mind at the sight of this gentleman, and one would have looked around or waited to hear the cooing of the dove. Formerly, too, the name of this gentleman was Hawk, and the hawk belongs to a good and ancient family of fighting habits. Now—such is the degeneracy of modern manners —the pigeon, who came of a good and honourable, if simple, stock, exists no longer. In his place is the Juggins, who is stupid but not credulous: who would be crafty if he could: who is only a lamb when he thinks he is a wolf: and would himself, if he could, become the modern successor to the ancient Hawk.

Whatever you call that successor, apply the title, dignity, and description to Mr. Harry Stanley, the one of the Signora's guests who was in evening dress. He was smoking a cigarette at the open window, and he was conversing in a low voice with Oliver Luttrel, who was sitting at the same window. Their conversation, if we may judge by the scowl on the latter's face, was not pleasant.

Although the season was early in July and the evening was warm, a fire was burning in the grate. On the hearthrug in front of the fire lay a figure wrapped from head to foot in a great crimson cloak, the head propped on pillows. It was so motionless and still that you might have taken it for a bundle of clothes or a lay figure; neither of the two men regarded it in the least.

The room was well-proportioned and large: the furniture was good: but the tenant clearly had her own ideas on the subject of colour, and these were not those of the æsthetic school. The walls were painted crimson, with a gilt dado: the curtains were crimson, with gold fringes: the chairs and sofas were covered with crimson velvet: the carpet was crimson; the lamps had crimson or yellow shades hanging over them: the very glasses on the table were all of red or gold. The redness of the room would have affected the æsthetic person like unto the breath of a raging fiery furnace.

"Oliver," said the man in evening dress, carrying on the conversation, "it comes to this: you must get money."

"I can't get any money."

"Besides what you owe me—never mind that for the present—between brothers, what is a pony?—you lost twenty pounds and you gave an I O U at the club on Sunday."

"Tell the man—what is his name?—to wait. He must wait, unless you will lend me the money."

"Oh! very well. But, sonny, if you play cards at clubs with gentlemen, you must follow the rules of gentlemen. That is, you must pay up."

Oliver made no reply.

"Otherwise, the next time you are taken to that club, you get the Boot. And as for the man who took you——"

"That's enough," said Oliver impatiently. "How the Devil can I give you what I haven't got?"

"Get it, sonny; get it," replied the other, blandly. "What do other fellows do? They get the money when they must. They get it off the old man—you've got an old man——"

"He's got no money to give me."

"They use their wits to get it, somehow. But they do get it when they must; and the time comes—don't you know?—when it's their turn to lift the swag—when they've learned the trick."

"You mean I am to learn how to——" He did not finish the sentence because Mr. Harry Stanley nodded his head with decision.

"Pre—cisely. That is exactly what you will have to do. If you want to go on the racecourse, you must either drop your money or know your way about. If you play cards you must know how to cut and how to deal and how to make friends. Lord! Lord! To think

that you could sit down to play with one of us and believe that the play was square!"

"Then," said Oliver, "what did you let me do it for?"

"Perhaps I wanted you to learn your way about by yourself a bit; perhaps—but here's Julia."

The conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the Signora herself. She threw the door open with what is commonly called a bang, and stood for a moment with a stage gesture as if expectant of the applause which every night welcomed her appearance. Then she tore off her cloak and threw it carelessly into the corner—in these chambers things were a good deal thrown into the corner—and stood revealed in a dress of crimson velvet, with a gold necklace, gold bracelets, and a great gold chain round her neck. When she changed her dancing dress at the Theatre it was for this magnificent costume, though she was only going home to have supper *en famille.* But she was one of those ladies who love to feel themselves dressed. Only when she had chains of gold about her, diamond rings on her fingers, and could stroke the rich silk or soft velvet of her dress, did she feel truly happy. Her figure and face set off her splendid attire; for she was tall and ample in her proportions, and her countenance was that of a swarthy Queen. The great Zenobia probably resembled Giulia Coroni: and perhaps Vashti, or even Esther herself, was not unlike her. Helen of Troy had black hair and black eyes, but she was of whiter skin and of more slender figure. As for her face, it was not a merry or a laughing face at all: she was one of those women who never want to make or to hear a

joke: she could smile when she pleased—how she could rip when she was angry one dares not guess: she could also laugh, but it would only be at the discomfiture of an enemy.

"Come," she said, "let us have supper. Oliver, you look down on your luck. Has Harry been teasing you for money? I warned you that he would make you gamble. As if there ever was a Romany who would not gamble and bet and race. You might put on your evening things, my child, when you come to supper with a lady. Lord! it isn't as if I cared about dress clothes, but they look like money; and if we are swells and have left the tents and the road—you remember the tents and the road, Pharaoh, if Sam doesn't—why let's behave as such. Open the champagne, Pha—I mean Harry—and let's all have a glass to begin with. Give Oliver two, to make him stop scowling. He looks just like he did twenty years ago. That's right. Where's Granny?"

"She's dead, I think," Harry replied, twisting the wire. "We've been here half an hour and she hasn't moved. Lively company she must be, all day long."

"Here, Granny!" The girl pulled off the mantle and raised the form which lay huddled up beneath. "Come," she said, "you've been asleep before the fire all the evening, and it's a baking hot night. Get up and have your supper, and then you shall go to bed. That's right—now then." She lifted the helpless bundle to her feet, where she stood—an old woman, shrunken, toothless, her face lined with a thousand curves, bent with rheumatic pains, and shaking her head with palsy —mumbling and grumbling—a very terrible old woman

to look at. The girl twisted her wig straight—it had wriggled round so as to cover one eye—pulled her things right, and led or carried her to an armchair at the table, where she sat blinking her eyes and bobbing her head. She was dressed, however, in black silk and had a gold chain round her neck, and looked wealthy if not venerable.

Julia poured out a tumblerful of champagne and gave it to her. The effect on the old lady was wonderful. She ceased to shake her head and sat up, and her eyes became steady: she was no longer contemptible or pitiable.

Then she looked about the table and saw the two men.

"Pharaoh!" she murmured affectionately. "What a man he is! It does an old woman good only to look at such a man. Ah, once they used to look at me. Give him all he wants, Sal, all he wants. Brothers such as him are scarce. Give him all you've got so that he may go about with the swells. Is that Sam—little Sam? Oh! I knew him again when first he came back to us, three weeks ago. He ain't growed much. But he was always a little shrimp. An ugly little devil he was, too."

"Very well, Granny. Now we will sit down and have supper, and let us talk."

They waited on themselves. After all, that was but a return to old customs, and was no hardship but a relief. In their waiting the plates mostly went into the corner where the cloak lay, because a lady does not change her personal habits with her clothes, and the divine Julia, not to speak of the gallant Harry, remem-

bered many of the habits peculiar to the tent and the road, and practised them when no one was looking. As for the dear old lady, she sucked the bones and scraped her plate, and used the knife instead of the fork, quite after the old fashion, without shame or knowledge that there should be any shame. And all of them attacked the supper, which consisted of many excellent dishes, including cold salmon, mayonnaise, aspic of plovers' eggs, other crafty compounds of jelly and toothsome things, and tarts and cakes, with a vigour and heartiness perhaps hereditary. In the old days their ancestors, when they did get a feast, which was not often, made the most of it.

As for the old lady, the champagne had so set her up that she took as much supper as her granddaughter, speaking not one word until she had quite finished. Then she held out her glass and drank off another tumbler of champagne. This despatched, she fell back in her chair and began to murmur, sometimes under her breath and sometimes aloud.

"She's been at the cards again," said Julia. "She was sitting over them all the afternoon. She's full of our fortunes. Never mind, Granny—we don't want to know what's going to happen."

"The Jack of Spades—that's Sam," said the old lady. "The Jack of Clubs is Pharaoh. I read Sam's fortune for him to-day, I did. Ho! ho! if Sam only knew what was coming!"

"He don't want, Granny," Julia interposed. "Oliver, it seemed a grand thing for you, that day when the swell took you away in a growler and I climbed up behind to see where you were going. Sal, I was then—

now I'm Julia—things have altered a bit, haven't they? Look at me now. Look at the fine times I'm having. Come and see me at the Theatre, with all the House clapping and stamping the moment I appear: look at me—able to live like this—to drink champagne every day—to put on as much silk and velvet as I can—what do you call that?"

"It means success," said Oliver, whose face, thanks to the champagne, had lost its scowl. "It means, I suppose, that you've gone to the front, Julia."

"Very well, then, look at Harry—Pharaoh that was. Look at him, there isn't a swell to come near him for looks and manners. And as for money, sometimes it runs like water."

"When things come off," her brother corrected her, with becoming modesty,

"Well—they mostly do—whereas you, why, you poor little chap—you've got to work. Something in the chemist shop line, I understand, among the bottles and the scales. You're the first man in the family that ever did work. With all your work, you've got no money: you never will have any. No money! Then you can't stand suppers to the girls after the theatre—and you can't give them dinners of a Sunday: you can't take stalls, nor buy bouquets: you can't wear swell clothes: you can't show rings and things: and as for races and betting—how can you go to any meetings or learn what goes on when you're always in the shop? So, you see, we did better to stick in the dossing ken, though Granny did do her best to sell us."

"A fair man and a little woman and a stranger from across the seas are on their way to do harm to Sammy.

Let him take care of a fair man and a little woman and a stranger from across the seas. A young man and a young woman and a man from across the seas —two men from across the seas. Let him take care. They will do him a mischief—let him take care."

"All right, Granny," said Julia. "If every young man took care of every young woman, there wouldn't be any mischief at all, and there would be no fun. That is quite certain. Well, Oliver, what was I saying? Oh! Yes—you've got no money. Now if you'd stayed with us you'd have learnt something useful. I began to dance at the races when I was only eight, and Harry he began to sing character songs and to practise with the cards wellnigh as soon as he could walk. You'd have been a tight-rope dancer, or a rider, or a clown, or something that rakes in the money."

"He's got to find some way of raking in the money," said Harry. "That's what I've been telling him."

"How much is it, Harry? What has he lost?"

"Well, it don't matter much what he owes me. If I'd lost, I should have had to pay, I suppose. But he lost a matter of twenty pound last Sunday, and I must pay if he can't."

"Well, I'll give him the twenty pound. As for you, Oliver, if you don't know how to play, what a fool you are to try! What can you expect? Why, I suppose you can't even cut the King. How *can* a man be such a fool as to play when he don't know how? Teach him to play, can't you, Harry?"

The easy morality of his newly recovered relations —it was only three weeks or so since Mr. Harry Stanley walked into the Laboratory and revealed himself as a

long-lost brother—was no longer astonishing. Oliver knew very well the circumstances of his origin: that is to say, he remembered the squalid surroundings from which he had been taken: that a brother of his should have risen to any level in which evening dress is worn, was a surprise, which, until he learnt more, was pleasing. That his sister was a favourite *danseuse* was another surprise, by no means unpleasant at first. By this time he had learned more about his brother: there were things to be deplored, that was now certain: there were things to be hidden. The discovery of this fact at first amused him: nobody knew that this man was his brother: nobody suspected that his sister was the celebrated Giulia Coroni. It was a new world to which he was introduced: he listened to their talk and watched their habits. Nothing at all resembling these people had he seen in Heidelberg. He was very much amused: he was so much amused when his brother took him to his club that he was induced to play a little game of cards—and lost.

"Well," repeated his sister, "I'll pay for him, and do you look after him better, Harry. Open another bottle and let me give Oliver some more. He's had nothing." She meant nothing but pure hospitality. Her younger brother had really taken as much champagne as is wholesome to an unaccustomed head. But he suffered his sister to fill him another of those great glasses with which the restaurants and people who seem to take their manners from restaurants do now delude the unwary. He drank it. And presently there fell upon his spirit a new sense of *camaraderie* and fraternity. He remembered that he belonged to these people: he

was really and truly of their blood: he seemed to remember—but this was impossible—the tents and the road. Like them, he did not belong to the world: he was outside it: he was one of the nation which has always lived by the exercise of its wits. His brother, for instance, was a betting man, an adventurer, a card-sharper: one who looked about for gulls and plundered them. Why not? Why not?

This was a singular view to take, but he fell into it quite naturally. Honour has nothing to do with the wandering race of Egypt.

They began to talk about himself and to ask him questions. By this time he had taken another and yet another bumper.

. . . . . .

When he awoke in the morning it was with a strange sense of having lost something. He got up, and dressed, troubled with this thought—what had he lost?"

Suddenly he remembered he had given away a secret: a thing which he had discovered: and that he had communicated, in the rough, a half-formed idea. It was an idea so certain to commend itself to his brother that he had communicated it with boastfulness. The idea had, in fact, met with his brother's full approbation. He had even added suggestions of his own which almost transformed the idea into a plan.

"Oliver," he said, laying his hand upon his shoulder, "I never expected to find you so wide awake. My dear boy," he added, with feeling, "the utmost I dreamed of was that you might get something—some day—when we are all hard up—off the old man. I will see you through this job, sonny."

Oliver had been left, as we know, to find out for himself the true theory of the Conduct of Life and of the relations of man to man. But he had been among fellow-students of a German University, and he had been among English boys at school. He had therefore acquired, not by the process of reasoning, but by imitation and daily association, certain notions of honour. And when he remembered this talk with his brother, and the thing which he was going to be "seen through," he turned pale and his knees trembled. The reign of the Individual may have begun, but the power of old illusions is not yet trampled out: they are sturdy rebels, and the safety of the Individual's Crown sometimes seems by no means assured.

## CHAPTER VI.

### AN INTERRUPTED RAMBLE.

THE exploration of Poet and Player Land was followed by other rambles, Althea always being guide. In this way the young man whom she conducted—never had colonial visitor so splendid a chance!—learned to surround all kinds of mean and squalid places with the halo of history and romance. They remain, it is true, mean and squalid still; but just as Bank Side itself was made glorious by the setting sun and by the goddess who came down the river in the golden mist, so the narrow lanes in which they wandered are clothed, in his mind, with the memories of the past. Nay, when he still thinks of them, he sees again the graceful figure

of the girl, again he watches her earnest face, he feels again the look of her steadfast eyes, he hears her voice sweet and low. Where the crowded streets now cover what was once the splendid Abbey of Bermondsey: where Lambeth Palace stands beside the river: where were once Cupid's Gardens: where the ships stick their bowsprits across the streets of Rotherhithe: beside the pretty lake of Southwark Park: yea, and across the river in the heart of London City, the girl walked beside him, rapt and serious, recalling things that have been. It is a time which he will not readily forget. How should he forget the happiest time in his life—those days when, for the first time in his life, he began to feel that henceforth life would be impossible without one girl? A man may suffer from such an attack and recover from it; and again he may suffer and again recover—nay, there are men who have it like a quartan fever; but the first experience is the most severe and the most delightful. Such worship can a young man bring to one woman only, in all his life. Of which more anon.

These rambles must remain unchronicled. Can we not make them out for ourselves from the London books?

But one day, a fortnight or so after their first walk, they proposed to travel, all through one afternoon, from west to east, from Puddle Dock to Tower Hill, from one end to the other of Thames Street. It was an ambitious programme, because the history of London might almost be written in Thames Street alone. Yet they attempted it, and, but for an unexpected interruption, they would have carried it through.

It was again, as on their first walk, a Saturday afternoon. On other afternoons the street is filled with noise: its cranes in the upper stories are always labouring, creaking, and groaning as they lift or lower the bales: the sky is darkened with these big bales as they swing and threaten over the heads of the passengers: there is a bawling from Billingsgate which can be heard afar off: waggons lumber along and block the road: clerks hasten up and down: porters lean against posts and converse loudly, not without frequent use of the decorative word which always brightens workaday English. But on Saturday there is a holy calm. If it is a bright afternoon the sunshine on the tall warehouses makes them look like mediæval fortresses or Italian Palazzi.

One would rather walk down Thames Street than the High of Oxford, or the Cannebière of Marseilles, or the Rue St. Honoré. The modern warehouses are not in the least picturesque, yet the names which remain carry the memory back; the succession of churches, though broken here and there by the havoc of modern barbarians, marks the piety of London merchants; the narrow courts still lead to the old stairs, and the two ancient ports of Queenhithe and Billingsgate can still be seen.

The sunshine fell upon the street this afternoon as they stood at the West end of it in Printing House Square.

"You are going to teach me more history," said Laurence. "Shall we become ghosts once more?"

"If you like," she replied. "But there is a great deal more history here than I can teach you in a single afternoon. Come."

Then she began to talk. London began in Thames Street, where two little hillocks, with a brook between, rose above the river, on either side a swamp. When the hillocks were quite built upon and still there was not room enough for the trade which continued to grow, they built a river wall and more houses behind it; and then they constructed their two ports, and as they grew richer they began to build stately houses upon the river wall: at one end Baynard's Castle and at the other the Tower: in the midst Cold Harbour and the King's Steelyard. Here lived the Hanse merchants: here were the Halls of City Companies: in the streets leading up the hill at the back stood many a noble mansion in its courtyard, full of precious carvings, rich tapestry and caskets from foreign parts: along the street was a succession of noble churches, each with its monuments and tombs, its vaults and its churchyard filled with the bones of dead citizens.

"Do you see the dead citizens walking in the streets?" asked Laurence.

"Sometimes," she replied, with a little blush. "On Sunday morning, when there has been no one in the street but myself, I have met Sir Richard Whittington, tall and thin, grey-bearded, with a chain of esses round his neck and a black velvet coat over his silk doublet. He is a very stately figure: he carries himself with dignity, and in his face there is Authority."

Then Althea led her scholar down the narrow courts to the river-side, and up the streets which lead to the higher part: she showed him the churches and the places where the churches had been: Whittington's College and the place where his bones are lying still: the

Companies' Halls: the port of Queenhithe, which still preserves its ancient form though the buildings round it are modern: the great houses still standing, and the ancient stairs and wharves—she was filled to overflowing with the history of the whole.

When they were as yet no more than halfway down the street occurred the interruption which has been already mentioned. Althea stopped at the corner of a street leading north. A little way up the street there was a church Tower set a little back, and, projecting from its face, a great clock reaching halfway across the street, with a curious little figure upon it. This church led to the Unexpected Event which changed the aspect and the memory of that walk.

"It is the church of St. Leonard le Size," she said. "I wonder if you would like to see it. There is not a great deal to see, but the wood carvings are fine, and it is Aunt Cornelia's Church. She is always there."

"Aunt Cornelia's church! My brain reels. Is she the Rector, or the Vicar, or perhaps the Curate only?"

Althea laughed.

"Why," she said, "Aunt Cornelia is the pew-opener and caretaker."

"Oh!" His face fell. The drop from Rector or Vicar—at one time he had even thought of Bishop or Archdeacon—to Caretaker and Pew-opener was sudden and overwhelming. His cousin too! He would have greatly preferred hearing that she was the Incumbent of the Living.

"Her husband was Sexton of the church, and so she got the place. Mr. Waller, I thought you knew

that at Bank Side we are all humble people. What else could you expect?"

"I have found, Miss Indagine, what no one would have expected."

"You mean that you have found my father." He did not exactly mean that, but the girl said it in the most perfect innocence and without any consciousness of what another girl would have seen at once. Therefore he accepted the interpretation with meekness.

"Why not a pew-opener?" he replied. "Pews must be opened. It is a part of the Church Ritual. Where there are pews there must be pew-openers. In the early Church — but I forget the Greek for pew-opener——" Then a curious arithmetical problem arose in his brain and took the form of a sum in Rule of Three: "If a Pew-opener be described as in the Church, what may be the limits of the Higher Branch?" But he reserved the solution of this problem for a fitting opportunity.

"Come and see the church," said Althea, "and Aunt Cornelia in it."

"Why do you call her Aunt? You are no relation of the Cottles, are you?"

"No, indeed. But I have known Cassie and Flavia all my life, and so, you see, I have got into the way. Here is the porch."

She would have led the way into the church, but stopped and drew back.

"Oh!" she murmured, with pity in her voice. "Here is that poor creature again."

From the church within there were heard voices: *first, a* hard measured voice, speaking with precision,

and as the words were harsh, they seemed to fall like hammers. The other was a soft and gentle voice, replying humbly.

"You mean to stand there and tell me that you have dusted and swept the whole church—the whole church—in this short time?"

"Yes."

"You've forgotten the organ."

"I have not forgotten anything."

"Then there was never any money so easily earned. I wonder you are not ashamed to take it. Here's your shilling. Take it and go. A shilling indeed! More than half of it is Charity. Don't let me see your face again till Saturday next. Well—why don't you go? What are you stopping for?"

"I owe for three weeks' rent—seven and sixpence. Where am I to find seven and sixpence? All this week I have only earned three and eightpence, counting this shilling. Three shillings and eightpence! Three and eightpence! Think of trying to live on three and eightpence for a whole week! When I've paid one week's rent, there is one and twopence left for food."

"You have only got what you deserved to get. You have made your bed. Now lie upon it."

"Oh! Cornelia, have you no pity?"

"You are a disgrace to the family. Pity? Don't I give you work and a shilling a week? Isn't that Christian Forgiveness?"

"Let me go and ask Claudia."

"No. You shall not trouble Claudia. If you venture to trouble Claudia or Lucius it will be the worse

for you. Get work. It is all you can do. Go away, I say, and look for work."

The woman came out, walking slowly and with bent figure. She was no longer young, but her face was still sweet and must once have been beautiful. Now it was pinched with privation and heavy with trouble. She was very poorly dressed: in a black gown with some kind of jacket mournful in decay and a very battered bonnet. Althea ran to meet her, taking her by both hands, the tears in her eyes.

"Oh," she said, "I heard all. Why—why—did you not come to tell me? I might have done something."

"She won't let me. I am never to go on the other side at all for fear I should meet Claudia and Lucius or be recognised by the children. Oh! as if my own sister would recognise me now—let alone the children, who have never seen me!"

"Then I will come to you since you must not come to me. I cannot pay your rent for you because I have no money at all—no—not a shilling in the world. But we can talk and perhaps we shall find out a way somehow. Good-bye. Go home straight. I will come to you presently."

The poor woman walked slowly away. Laurence looked on wondering, not knowing what this might mean. Then Althea joined him again with the manner of one who wished the late incident to be regarded as closed.

"Come," she said. "Let us go into the church."

They found Aunt Cornelia sitting in a hard, straight-backed chair without arms, a chair of Penance, in the antechamber, Galilee or Pronaos—a large and comfort-

able room beautifully wainscoted with mahogany, now two hundred years old and more, and black, but lustrous. There was a religious obscurity in the place. The Pew-opener's chair was outside the doors of the church, and if Aunt Cornelia had been forming part of a grand concerted piece with a thousand eyes upon her she could not have sat with greater solemnity. As for the admonition she had just bestowed upon her humble sister, that had left no ripple upon the serenity of her face. She sat with her hands in her lap, bolt upright, as one who knows her dignity. She was an officer of the church, which, with its pews, prayer-books, bibles, hassocks, curtains, cushions, beadle's mace, its tablets, its vestry, its cupboard with the Sacramental Plate, and its Registers, was all under her care. It has been observed concerning ladies of this profession, that whereas most women find repose impossible and must still be at work with needle or knitting, unless they are talking, reading, shopping, or at the Theatre, pew-openers are gifted with the power of sitting still without doing anything at all: and of sitting alone and in silence. They are, to be sure, generally old: they have, thanks to their office, no anxiety about the daily bread: their season of love and its alarms is over long ago: they are at rest: the calm of the church has entered into their souls: they desire no physical activity. Sailors of the old school, accustomed to long spells of calm and to long hours of idle watch with the trade wind blowing steady and not a sail to change, used to arrive at a similar restfulness of soul.

Cornelia looked up as they entered from the Porch. She recognised them with a smile of welcome, or per-

haps of pride. To be surprised by her lodger in the full discharge of her official duties was gratifying. Thus should every zealous servant be discovered!

"Aunt Cornelia," said Althea, "I have brought Mr. Waller to see the church."

"I will show him the church," she said rising. "I dreamed last night that I was chopping wood. It is a sure sign of a stranger."

She opened the door and led the way into the church within. The round-headed windows were filled with modern painted glass: there was a good deal of gilding about the East, over the altar hung a great painting: the pulpit and reading-desk, organ gallery, and wherever room could be found for it, were covered with wood carvings of fruit and flowers. On the walls, between the windows, hung tablets to the memory of dead parishioners. It is a very ancient parish: thousands of good citizens lie buried in its vaults: but the Great Fire burned the ashes of all who were there when it flamed through the church and changed the stone carvings and the splendid tombs into lime and powder. Half a dozen Lord Mayors, at least, lie here; and Heaven only knows how many Aldermen, Common Councilmen, and Ancient Masters of the City Company which came here every year on its High Day.

Cornelia displayed the treasures of the church with the air—few pew-openers or vergers achieve it—of a lady showing her own picture gallery or library. She was at once modest and proud. Laurence followed her, admiring mechanically. Indeed, there are many *Churches in* London City more interesting than that of *St. Leonard* le Size, and it was not conceived in Wren's

happiest mood. The young man was thinking of his cicerone. Cornelia was in the Church. Cannot a lady be in the Church except in this humble position? Shameful! And his mother—remembering this little prim figure with the big head and the smooth black hair plastered flat to the sides and brought up behind the ear—could still believe that her cousins represented the Higher School of Manners. His mother, the most gracious, the best mannered lady in the Colony! And who was the Disgrace to her Family?

Cornelia led them back into the Porch. Laurence thought that they had seen everything. But she took out a candlestick from some secret recess and lit the candle in it, saying, severely, "You must see the Body before you go."

The Body! Was there, then, going to be an Inquest? Perhaps: for at the appearance of the candlestick Althea fled.

Cornelia found a key upon her bunch and unlocked one of the mahogany panels which differed in no respect from the others, save that it had a keyhole, invisible, except by the light of a candle. When the panel was opened it disclosed, behind a sheet of glass six feet high, a dried-up body standing bolt upright, its head a little bent and its eyelids cast down, as if ashamed of being seen in such a withered, naked, helpless, imprisoned condition, its flesh long since shrivelled and dead, the skin clinging tight to the bones, its cheeks fallen in, its lips, thin and white, drawn tightly over the projecting teeth.

"Good Heavens!" cried Laurence. "What are you *going to do* with a mummy?"

"He was found," said Cornelia, changing the position of the candle so as to bring out the best points of the Body," in the vaults when they were examined before bricking them up for good. The other corpses were gone to bones and dust, but this one, you see, was somehow preserved. He dried up. Because it was such a curious thing they brought him up and made a cupboard for him behind the wainscoting. A beautiful Body he is, to be sure. Six feet high he must have been, with a very fine leg of his own, they tell me. And there's an arm for you!" The shrivelled limb with the skin tight to the bone hung at his side. "There's a breadth of shoulder! I wonder sometimes who he was: not a common person to be buried in the vaults. Perhaps a Lord Mayor or the Master of a Company. He's worn a gold chain in his time and sat in a chair of office. Well," she sighed, holding the candle before the bent head still covered with lank hair, "I dare say his eyes were young once, like yours, young man." Laurence shuddered. "As he is now, so shalt thou be. Then go away and think of me. He is company for me while I am sitting alone here, especially in the dusk. I think there's two of us in the church to look after it—him and me. Many a time I light the candle and unlock the panel just to look at him and to give him a little light. Little do the people think when they come here of a Sunday—they do come—sometimes I've counted as many as thirteen at service, all at once—I say—little do they think what is behind the wainscot. Sometimes I long to open the door and show them what we've got here. You're a beauty, you are!" She bobbed the candle

up and down so that the light produced the appearance of what we call play of feature—and it was very ghastly. "As he is now, so shall they be. Then let them go away and think of—of he." She stroked the glass with her hand and tenderly patted it as if she were patting the cheek of the Body in order to cheer and comfort him in his long imprisonment. Then she sighed regretfully, as one who laments that friends must part, blew out the candle, and locked the panel.

There was nothing more to show. She had done her duty. She retired to her chair and resumed her seat, her lips pursed, her hands crossed in her lap, as if the interview were over and she must now be left to continue her silent watch over the empty church with her brother guardian the Body. Laurence left her sitting watchful and silent in this place of shadows. Without, he found Althea waiting for him, clothed with sunshine. Within, age, shadow, silence, and death presented in its most hideous form. Without youth and light, sunshine and beauty.

"Do you know," he asked, "this dreadful thing that they have got there?"

"I saw it once," she replied shuddering.

"And she sits there all day with that awful Body close beside her?"

"All day long and every day. The church is always open and no one ever goes into it. She is always alone. She likes the Body. Hush! Cassie once found her sitting in front of the open panel with two candles, and she was talking to the Body."

"I should not be surprised to learn that on dark days the Body walked out of the cupboard and that

they took a turn together in the vaults below. But that she should sit and talk to it—I wonder what the Body talks about. However, it fully accounts for Aunt Cornelia's pale face."

"Shall we go on with Thames Street?"

"Shall we shut the book of history here? Aunt Cornelia has put me off the antiquities of Thames Street. Sometimes—don't you think so?—the Living are more interesting than the Dead. She sits in the dark empty church all day and she talks to a Body behind a glass. And she blows up the unfortunate Disgrace to the Family—the Family!" He remembered suddenly that it was his own. "Who is she? Who is she? You know her. Who is the Disgrace, and what is her name?"

"I have seen her here and I have gone to her lodgings with her. She is horribly, dreadfully poor. That is all I know about her. She does not like to talk about herself, but I am sure she is in some way connected with the Cottles."

"Curious! She reminded me—but that is absurd. The longer I stay in Bank Side, Miss Indagine, the more interesting the place becomes. Think how great must be the dignity of the Cottles since it will not suffer the Disgrace to be within walking distance. The Disgrace! She interests me greatly. May I be permitted—will you suffer me—to pay the poor thing's arrears of rent for her? Thank you very much. This poor Disgrace! Thank you very much. I have had a most delightful afternoon. Everything was new to me. Cornelia's church: and the Disgrace: and the Body—I do hope the Body enjoyed the little change of having

his panel opened. You will tell me, won't you, Miss Indagine?—about the Disgrace. Do not, please—I entreat you—do not let her want. Did you notice what a soft voice she had and what a sweet face? She reminded me—somehow—she made me think—of my own mother."

## CHAPTER VII.

### SUNDAY MORNING.

At a quarter before eleven on the Sunday morning there is wafted across the river the mingled cling-clang-clash of a hundred bells—made melodious by the soft influence of distance—from St. Dunstan's in the West to St. Dunstan's in the East or even St. George's, Ratcliffe. They call the London citizens to church, as they have called them for a thousand years. Alas! These citizens hear no more the pious call. Along the leafy lanes of Weybridge, on the breezy *chaussée* of Hampstead Heath, over the turf of Wimbledon, across the furzy common of Barnes, everywhere—all round London—they are moving Churchwards, obedient to the harsh tinkle of the little bell in the perky new suburban church: but the loud tongue of the sonorous City bell strikes not upon their ears.

On the South side also they are not without their bells. They ring out lustily from the pinnacles of St. Mary Overy, from the tall needle of Horselydown, from the squab tower of St. Tooley and from St. George of the merry Borough. They make all together—the bells

of the City and the bells of the Borough—such a ringing, resonant, rolling consonation and concert of invitation, that one feels how mean and poor-spirited must be the creature who would refuse to enter a church after this magnificent overture, and how very much to be pitied is the poor Dissenter, who hath no part or share in it, and no such preliminary heart-awakener played for him on his way to Chapel. Yet the Churches —both of City and of Borough—are reported to be generally empty.

Laurence stood at the head of the stairs, gazing across the river. He was soothing his spirit in the manner customary to young men after breakfast. It may be observed that no opposition was now made to the profanation of the Academy by the use of the weed at any time. Suspicion of all kinds had wholly vanished. The lodger had subdued all hearts. Even the punch-bowl was restored to its place without anxiety: relations of a truly fraternal character were established with the girls: this young man, in fact, carried so much cheerfulness about him that he could communicate some of it to everybody and never feel the loss. Cornelia herself regarded him with friendly eyes. But this morning his face, usually so cheerful, was touched with anxiety.

Beside him, on the wooden bench of that rough belvedere already spoken of, sat Cassie. She was so daintily dressed in her Sunday "Things" that she ought to have felt and looked happy. Alas! a pretty bonnet and a becoming costume will cause a girl to forget a good many things—long hours of work, nagging, an *empty* purse, an insufficient dinner—but under certain

afflictions even the consolations of dress fail. Cassie carried her prayer-book; presumably therefore she was going to Church, but she hardly looked as if the consolations of religion would greatly help her. Dark circles ringed her eyes: her soft cheeks were pale: her rosebud lips were set hard: her shapely head was drooping. These were signs of distress; of storm; perhaps of temper. Laurence glanced at her from time to time with anxious eyes, but said nothing. He was wise. If you want a girl to tell you a thing, leave it unquestioned. Then that thing will grow and swell up within her mind until it must be spoken and further reticence is impossible.

While the rolling and the riot of the bells were at their highest, Lucius came forth from the house. He was dressed in black, brushed with neatness. His father always showed his respect for Sunday by wearing black, and he was not the man to bring contempt upon his ancestors by changing any old customs. When George the Fourth was king, great merchants—ay, and great lawyers, both of the Higher and the Lower Branch—always went to church in black. The custom still survives on Bank Side and elsewhere. If, for instance, you watch a row of houses in the respectable suburb of Stratford or Mile End a little before Church time, you will presently observe a swarming of families in the direction of Church or Chapel: you will also observe that the head of each family is clothed from head to foot in black. This fashion, however, is going out: a few short years more and it will have vanished—gone to the limbo of all bygone fashions. With the Sunday black Lucius assumed an air of more individual respon-

sibility and greater dignity. This is natural, and even praiseworthy. Man is a slave all the week: on Sunday he is free: he goes to Church as a voluntary act: he goes to his office or shop because he must. Besides, on Sunday he goes before the Lord of all, who will presently redress every injustice. This thought uplifts his heart and straightens his back.

"I trust, Mr. Waller," he said, crossing the road, and looking with visible apprehension at his daughter, "that you go to Church. Some young men, I learn in Chambers—we in Chambers learn a great deal of the outer world—are conspicuous, lamentably conspicuous, for the neglect of that duty."

Laurence replied briefly that at Sydney he went to Church regularly. He remarked that the manner of the little man betrayed a state of great nervous agitation. He naturally connected this with Cassie's stormy looks. The girl, for her part, at the appearance of her father, turned her head away and looked across the river. This gesture Laurence made haste to connect with a family row.

"My dear," said Lucius, with apprehensive voice, "your sister is now drawing on her gloves. You are also ready, I hope, for the . . . the calm and tranquillity of Church?"

Cassie made no reply. The wise man bows before the feminine mood: Lucius did not press the question. He turned to Laurence instead.

"To give," he said, endeavouring to assume a judicial calm, "moral support to the Establishment is the duty of every good Englishman. It was my father's unbending rule. For my own part, since the official

connection of my sister with the Church of St. Leonard le Size, I have supported the Establishment by a weekly morning attendance there. The congregations are scanty, but the sermons appeal to the reason. I hope, Mr. Waller, that we may see you amongst us some day."

He walked away without appearing to notice his daughter's defiant and rebellious attitude, delicately and carefully, as one who would not stain or spot his silver buckles or white silk stockings with the dust and mud of the road.

Then Flavia came out, buttoning her gloves and accompanied by her brother. She was dressed, like Cassie, in her best bonnet and her Sunday frock. They made Cassie look prettier, but they only made her look more prim and formal.

Sempronius ran across the road.

"Come along, Cass," he said.

Cassie turned her shoulder again.

"You've had your flare-up," said the horrid boy. "Take and have done with it. What's the use of being cross with Flavia? She's done nothing."

Cassie returned no reply. Then Flavia herself came across.

"Are you going to St. Leonard's, Flavia?" Laurence asked.

It will be observed that he had by this time arrived at the Christian name, which is a great step, and shows that confidence is firmly established. If you spend most of your evenings with friendly girls, and are yourself easy and sympathetic and ready to make advances, it is not difficult to arrive quickly at the Christian name.

"No, Mr. Waller, we are not going to St. Leonard's. Father goes because he makes himself believe that it is grand for Aunt Cornelia to be a pew-opener. We don't; we go to St. Saviour's. Come, Cassie, if you are going too, it is time to start."

Cassie shook her head impatiently.

"Well—but you needn't keep in a temper."

"Leave her alone, Flavia," said Laurence. "Go on to church and we will join you presently."

"I've got to call for Althea. You can follow if you like."

"Oh! If Miss Indagine goes with you——"

"Of course," said Flavia, not lightly, but seriously, "if she is going you will go too." She walked away before Laurence fully understood what the meaning of her words might be. But they brought a slight suffusion to his cheek.

Then the bells left off ringing and a sweet silence fell upon the Bank. All those who go to church were by this time within the sacred walls. Those who do not go to church—it is said these unhappy persons are in the majority—were lying in bed. Those who live in the Liberty of the Clink and its vicinity mostly lie in bed all Sunday morning. Whether they go to church in the evening or not is doubtful. Perhaps, in the great ugly barracks of Red Cross Street, where so many thousands are bestowed, there are House or College Chapels where they hold services of prayer and praise. Otherwise one fears——. However, Bank Side at the hour of Morning Prayer is as quiet as if St. Saviour's was crammed and the walls of all the Dissenting Chapels were bulging with pressure of worshippers.

Laurence knocked out the ashes of his pipe.

"Cassie, old chap," he said, "there's been a shindy of some sort, I perceive."

"It was all my fault," she burst out. "Oh! I've got such a horrid temper. But I didn't mean what I said. They ought to know that I didn't mean it. Oh, I'm so miserable that I don't know what I did say."

"Come, you promised last night that you'd tell me all about it. Better tell me than fly in a rage with your own people. Flavia has done nothing, as Sempronius said."

She hung her head and made no reply.

"Isn't it better to have it out with me than to spoil their pleasure at home?"

She was still silent.

"I'm as hard as nails. Hit me and hammer me. I shan't mind. If you feel like it, box my ears. Nobody's looking."

She shook her head.

"Well, then, if you won't tell me anything, shall we get up and go to church with the others? But church in such a frame of mind as this . . . really, Cassie."

The girl had risen when he proposed to go to church. Now she sat down again and burst into tears.

"The air is fresh this morning, and the sun is warm," said Laurence, looking another way. "It is, perhaps, better for us to be here than in church, particularly if you are going to talk to me. St. Paul's looks splendid in the sunshine. If you come to think of it, there isn't a better place for a quiet talk in the whole of London than Bank Side on a fine summer morning, is there? Nobody to disturb us: a com-

fortable bench, which might be cleaner, to sit down upon: a fine warm air: and the river at our feet."

Cassie went on sobbing and crying, regardless of Wren's masterpiece and ungrateful for the sunshine.

"I don't know," Laurence continued, unheeding, "whether I don't prefer this sunshine to the moonlight. Of course——" He went on talking as if the girl was in that mood for sympathetic listening which makes women who can command it so dangerous to unprotected man. "Of course, Cassie, I shall always think that the sunset is the finest time for Bank Side, especially when two goddesses come down from Heaven in a golden shell. Last night the moon was riding in great splendour over the river, wasn't she? I mean when I came out at ten, and found you leaning over the wall and looking at it."

She made no reply; but she left off crying and dried her eyes.

"That is," he explained, "you were not looking at it; you were crying into the river, just as you are doing now. It made a dangerously high tide, this morning. Cassie, my child, you promised to tell me all about it—you know you did. You said you would tell me this very morning; whereas, on the contrary, instead of having it over first and crying over it afterwards, you have been mixing up the proper order. You've sent your father to church all of a tremble, as they say, and you've bullied your inoffensive sister. Come, Cassie" (he laid a fraternal hand on hers), "all the week through you've been miserable, pretending to be jolly when you fancied a fellow was looking at you——"

"I thought," said Cassie simply, "that you only had eyes for Althea."

"Why do you think that?" Laurence asked, a blush upon his manly cheek.

"You are always with her. You go out upon the river together: you walk with her: you spend your evenings with her at home: you follow her with your eyes——"

"Yes—yes—enough said, Cassie."

"How can anybody wonder?"

"Anybody wonder?" he echoed.

"There isn't in the whole world," said Cassie loyally, "another such a girl as Althea."

"I begin to be quite certain that there isn't. In fact—I've been quite certain for some little time. There, Cassie—you have my secret: give me your own in exchange."

"My own—my secret. Oh! It is nothing. It is not worth telling."

"You are in trouble," he said. "Have you told Flavia?"

"No."

"Nor Althea?"

"No. I have told Althea——" she paused. "I have told Althea—what was not the truth."

"Perhaps if you tell me exactly what you told her I shall be able to reverse the statement and so get at the truth."

"I cannot tell you. Oh!" she burst into tears once more. "I am so miserable—so dreadfully unhappy. I wish I could die. I never thought I would be so unhappy. And nobody can help—nobody—not even you

—though you seem to be helping everybody—Mr. Indagine and all."

"Cannot I help you too?"

"No—no."

"I must guess then. Listen, Cassie, and tell me if I am right. There was once a girl—a very pretty girl she was—very pretty indeed—like you in that respect." Cassie smiled through her tears—a weak, wan, December smile. "She lived just as you do in a—a —yes—a romantic house beside the river far from the usual haunts of people, so that she had very few friends. She belonged, like you, to a most respectable family. Her father, just like yours—was a lawyer—in the Higher Branch—a Barrister."

"Father is a Barrister's clerk," said Cassie.

"Oh!" This discovery was a blow even harder to bear than the discovery of Cornelia's real relations with the Church. A barrister's clerk! So much dignity: such a carriage: such conversation: such an eighteenth-century manner—and only a clerk—a barrister's clerk! It seemed impossible. Cornelia was in the Church—a pew-opener in the Church. Lucius was in the Law—in the Higher Branch—a clerk in the Higher Branch. Where was the family greatness? But there remained the Prophetess. He would still hope something from the Prophetess.

"To be sure"—he dissimulated the weight of the blow—"I meant Barrister's clerk. Like your father, I said, in the Higher Branch. That, you see, was the point of similarity. In the Higher Branch. As for respectability, this girl, like you, actually had a grandfather. The ghost of her grandfather—so great was

their respectability—still lingered on the scene of his former family happiness. At night he sat upon the chest of drawers in the Best Bedroom, and if any fellow smoked a pipe in the room he used to cough and say 'Tcheehee! Tcheehee! You violate the Sanctity of the Academy.'"

Cassie looked uncertain whether she ought to laugh. Was it possible to laugh at her grandfather—Vicesimus Cottle?

"In a street near theirs was a house to which a young man belonged"—Cassie here coloured violently —"a dark-haired young man—a very remarkable young man to look at—he had a clever face, with very bright black eyes. And the young man cast eyes of admiration upon this pretty girl and presently told her that he loved her—that he loved her," Laurence repeated. "So far it is a beautiful story, because the girl began to love him in return and to think about him a great deal—I dare say all day and night. Then he gave her presents, just to mark his love, and promised fidelity, and went away. He was abroad—how long?"

"Six months," Cassie murmured.

"He was absent for six months. Then he came back to London and got an appointment and did something fine which made people talk of him and expect great things of him. So that the girl grew prouder of him every day."

"Every day," Cassie murmured.

"And he seemed to love her as much as ever."

"At first, as much as ever," she repeated.

"Which, of course, was not to be wondered at,

because she was a girl so pretty and so good. He wrote her beautiful letters, not only while he was away, but also after he came home."

"Oh! he did—he did—the most beautiful letters you can imagine."

"And then—then," Laurence hesitated, "he grew less affectionate. Gradually. She did not observe it at first—by degrees."

"No—no—no," Cassie cried, "it was not by degrees: it was suddenly. Oh! there was no sign of any change. It was all of a sudden—without any warning at all. He loved me in the evening and in the morning he loved me no longer. What had I done—what had I done—to make such a change?"

"Nothing at all."

"In the evening he held my hand in his and kissed me and wouldn't let me go, and the next day he wrote me a cruel dreadful letter, saying that it was all a mistake, and as for love, he found he had been quite wrong, because he did not love me at all. That was a week ago. Now you know why I have looked miserable. And oh! oh! Mr. Waller, what could I have done or said to break off all his love for me in a single moment?"

"Nothing at all," he said a second time.

"He did love me—I saw it in his eyes—I felt it when he touched me. How *can* a man love a girl in the evening and hate her in the morning?"

"He cannot,' said Laurence.

"Could anyone have told him anything? But there was nothing to tell. And I have no enemies. If we have no friends, we have no enemies. There is not a

single person who would do me a mischief—I am certain there is not."

"No one has done you a mischief, except the man himself, Cassie."

"Oh, I am so miserable. I cannot tell anybody. I am afraid to tell Flavia. No one can help me. It is so shameful—so dreadful—to be thrown away like a thing you want no more. And he will never—never—never love me again."

"If I were you," said Laurence, "since the man has acted like a blackguard"—the girl winced as if she had been struck with a whip—"a blackguard, I say,—best face the truth—I would put him out of my mind altogether." This he said ignorant of woman's heart.

"I cannot—oh! I cannot. And please don't call him hard names. It hurts me even that you should think hardly of him. Though he will never love me again—never—never—never."

Laurence looked across the river with great determination, trying to fix his eyes—which were a little hazy, no doubt with the freshness of the breeze—on the golden cross of St. Paul's.

"My dear child," he said presently, "I guessed what was going on. As for the reason—there can be but one. Has Oliver transferred his valuable affections to someone else?" He remembered the comedietta seen from the Bridge. "Has he told the same tale to another girl?"

"No—no. He thinks of nothing but his Laboratory and his science. He only told me—oh! it was cruel—that I could console myself with—— I cannot say it."

"Was it with me, Cassie? That was—bad form"

—his face betrayed a stronger phrase. "Very bad form indeed. Poor little girl! I am very sorry. If you think that he was jealous——"

"No—no—no. He was not jealous. Nobody could be jealous when you only have eyes for Althea."

"What did you tell Althea?"

"She suspected something—I don't know why"—lovers are exactly like the fabled bird of the desert who hides his head in the sand and thinks himself invisible—"and she asked me, and I told her a falsehood. I said that nothing had passed between Oliver and me."

"Does no one know at home?"

She shook her head. There had been no signs, of course—nothing at all—which should make her sister suspect. No walks with Oliver in the evening: no tell-tale glances: no blushes: and now no tears and misery. Of course no one suspected and no one knew.

I suppose that Laurence was too young and inexperienced to know how great a disaster had fallen upon this unfortunate damsel. If a woman throws over her lover he recovers in time from his rage and disappointment and discovers that there are other women in the world quite as good as the one who has refused him. It is only in the penny novelette that a man hurls himself to the devil because a woman throws him over. Nor indeed, in a similar position, does a woman die of a broken heart. She lives. But she is wounded and the scars do not heal. She never finds another completely to take the place of the one who has deserted her. She promised herself to him: she gave him her heart: she showed to him the secrets of her

soul: she took the image and thought of him into her mind, thinking that they would dwell there all her life: she loved the man, apart from the accidents of his comeliness, his strength, his genius, his birth, his reputation: he was the one man in all the world to her: whatever he might do, whether he should succeed or whether he should fail, mattered only to her so far as it should make him happy or miserable: it was enough for her that the man loved her: for her he was white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand: his head as the most fine gold: his mouth most sweet: yea, altogether lovely, O daughters of Jerusalem! To a woman there is no misery in the world more dreadful: there is no blow of fate more bitter: than the loss of her lover. He loves her no more: then she is no longer beautiful, no longer sweet: her very self-respect is torn from her: all her future—the splendid sunlit mist which wraps the future of a girl who has a lover—is destroyed: she is no longer one of the happy and endless procession which walks two by two across the stage of Life: yet she has left the crowd of maidens who wait together for their lovers: and she must now walk alone. Alas! poor Cassie!

Laurence began to whisper such words of consolation as he could find. What words? What consolation? The girl was bereaved. In bereavement who can console? The Art of Consolation has not yet been discovered. Nothing can console, unless it be forgetfulness: wherefore the bottle, in some cases—but this is elementary. We look for an anæsthetic of the heart under which we shall suffer bereavement without pain and lie sleeping till the sharpness and agony are over-

past. "I cannot bear it," cries the widow. "Then, Madam," says the physician, "what will you do?" "He has left me: he loves me no longer: I cannot bear it," said Cassie. "Then, child," said Laurence, "what will you do?"

Well: but only to cry out is something: to tell somebody else is a relief: to weep in solitude is to shed tears of rage and despair. If anybody will explain why Cassie found a greater relief in confessing to a brand-new friend and that a young man, than in confessing to her old friend Althea or to her sister, he will throw fresh light upon the female character.

They sat together on the shabby old bench among the barges and the heaps of scrap-iron and the cranes. Laurence told stories, all out of his own head, concerning the folly of girls who continue to think of men after they have proved themselves worthless: how their youth is wasted in melancholy and their age consumed by regrets: and of the wickedness of bestowing continued love upon men who do not deserve that supreme gift, and how to youth such love brings no happiness and to age it brings repentance. No one would believe that so young a man could be so eloquent on such a theme. Hard it is upon the historian that he cannot spare the space for so admirable a discourse. Unhappily it produced no effect—not the least in the world. Cassie loved this man: it is the way of a woman. Solomon himself could not understand it: and it was too wonderful even for Agur the son of Jakeh. She loved the man whether he was worthless or not. She would gladly have arisen to go forth with him to the ends of the world, even if he went on getting worse

and worse. She would love him and be unhappy—yet less unhappy than if she had been separated from him. Therefore, Laurence spoke as one that beateth the air.

Then he changed his line and spoke of Time—Time the Healer. He called it Time the Healer. It is a very old commonplace and it is not at all true. Time cannot heal anything. Time can only destroy. Time destroys regrets and remembrance and kindliness and affection: just as the dentist deadens the nerve. Time at last destroys the scars—when he destroys the frame itself.

But, even while Laurence discoursed, an image grew up in the girl's mind which soothed if it did not console her: it was suggested by the mention of Time as a Physician: she figured herself, in the distant future, a sad and interesting creature: bowed down with the weight of that one sorrow: she thought she should never be able to lose that sorrow: she saw herself nursing her grief: she saw her own drooping frame and heavy head—and the thought of the misery to come consoled the misery of the present.

About half-past eleven the poet came forth in his brown velvet jacket and his felt hat. But his head was lifted proudly and his shoulders were no longer bent: in imagination he was standing alone in the centre of the world, with the eyes of a boundless multitude upon him: a multitude composed of every race who speak the Saxon tongue: they gazed upon him, pointed at him, and applauded him. Laurence, to whom he kindly nodded, was but one of this crowd. He walked through a lane of imaginary admirers with firm step and

countenance unmoved till he came to the Bridge Stairs. Then he left the Bank and was joined on the Bridge by the Chevalier, with whom he walked every Sunday morning, after this official had peeled the potatoes and taken the Sunday dinner to the bake-house.

When St. Paul's struck a quarter-past twelve Cassie got up and said she would go to meet them coming out of church. She led Laurence to the end of Bank Street, where once stood the noble House of Winchester, though the street is called after the ancient Clink. It is the narrowest and the deepest street in the whole of London: it is like a long mine underground, or a deep and dark cañon in the rock: bridges cross it: warehouses rise on either hand: if a cart comes along the passenger must turn and fly: if two carts meet one must be backed out. There is a damp and sour smell in it which never leaves the street even on the Sunday. Close to the end of it is the ancient port beside which stood the little chapel before the Normans came and made their great monastery and built St. Mary Overy's Church, now called St. Saviour's.

On Sunday they have swept up and cleaned the market-place in front of the church, but there still lingers in the air the fragrance of crushed cabbage-stalks, bruised onions, pea-shucks, decaying apples and the like. But the place is quiet. Cassie went to the south door leading into the church, and they waited beside the monument of the illustrious Lockyer—the man of the Pill—until the others should come out.

"Have I said anything—anything at all, Cassie, to comfort and to help you?"

"No," she replied, truthfully, "nothing at all. But

you are kind. If I had not told someone I think I must have gone mad."

"Won't you tell Althea?"

"Oh, no, no! I want to tell no one. Let it all be forgotten. Hush! there is the organ. They will come out now."

Then the scanty congregation came out of the church: Althea and Flavia by the steps which lead from the new nave to the ancient transept; and they walked home together—Laurence beside Flavia, Cassie with Althea—through the narrow and winding ways. By this time the residents of Red Cross Street were up and dressed and collecting in the street against the opening of the Houses, so that the beauty of the day seemed gone. But Cassie was tranquil again, the first paroxysm of impatience over. Flavia observed this result and glanced anxiously at the face of her companion, not daring to ask what he had been told. The face was graver than was customary on account of this communication. She thought it was because Laurence was considering what was best to be done—having by this time perfect confidence in his power to do something. It was in the nature of this young man to inspire vast confidence. Something! It is the word which Hope always whispers in the ear—fond, foolish, sympathetic Hope! You have lost your place; there is only a month or so between yourself and starvation. Hope whispers, "Something will turn up. Be of good cheer." You are ruined. "Heart up," says Hope, "something will happen." Your disease grows worse: your case is well-nigh desperate. "Courage," says Hope. "Something will be found for you. That is not Azrael

whose wing you hear. It is the guardian angel who brings you health."

But Laurence was not thinking what should be done. In such a case nothing can be done. The exhibition of the common cow-hide would only make the offender hate the girl with a more bitter hatred. Nothing could be done. But he was wondering what Oliver meant by it. Always he saw before him that little drama that was played below the bridge; and his face hardened and his eyes glared only to think that Althea—Althea—Althea—should be wooed by this young expounder of the latest and the worst Philosophy—the most despairing and the most destructive.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### SUNDAY EVENING.

It was on the evening of this memorable day that Laurence first saw Claudia—who prophesied. Her name, he found, was not often mentioned in the family circle, because religious opinion separated her from her sister. Cornelia—the thing was due to her official position—could not in decency recognise Dissent in any form, nor could she encourage any religious Function which is not conducted according to the formularies of the Church of England. Now there is no form of prayer prescribed for those who prophesy. None has survived from the time of the early Church. The other members of the household, including her brother Lucius, regarded the Prophetess with a certain pride;

notwithstanding the originality and daring of her opinion, she sustained and even advanced the greatness of the family. Flavia, indeed, went farther. This young woman, who possessed the desirable gift of independence, openly maintained the doctrine that the New Testament Believers' Borough Branch—led by her Aunt Claudia—could not be dislodged from their position by any arguments. They had, in fact, repeatedly challenged argument, and as the challenge was never taken up even by the clergy of the parish, it was clear that no one was able to answer them. She therefore attended the Chapel every Sunday evening, and looked confidently for a time when the gift of prophecy should be bestowed, as in early days, upon all believers. She also attended the tea parties, lectures, confessions of experience, prayer meetings, and the other gatherings by which the life of the community was sustained.

It is obviously the first duty of every Sect, Church, Connection or Persuasion to establish on a firm basis its claim to possess the Truth. Fortunately, no Church has ever been started which could not prove so much, at least, with the greatest ease. If one thinks of it, there is not a single Sect whose position is not absolutely impregnable. Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Bible Christian, Jezreelite, Quaker, Shaker—every one dwells in a strong fortress, in which he is secure from every enemy. When the faithful are fully persuaded of this comfortable fact, it is the next business of the leaders to reward their followers by providing for them emotions various and pleasing, excitement, and fraternal love—which last often deepens into something deeper, and even changes its character altogether. Perhaps it

was this side of the chapel which attracted Flavia. Her life was narrow and dull: her work at St. Martin's over, there was nothing at all left for the rest of the day. She was not a girl who could find her chief amusement in reading, and there were no books to read except those borrowed by her brother. Like most girls who have thrown over the domestic life, she could not sit down every evening to sew and make things in linen and flannel, nor could she find absolute happiness in the decoration of an old hat with new ribbon: she had no lover, nor did any thoughts of love enter into her head. The dulness of her life was only an unfelt force: it did not weigh upon her: she was not actively discontented: but the Chapel offered her a change. Heavens! how great a change! It opened for her the gates of the New Jerusalem that she might look through, though as yet she might not enter. Here she felt the yearning after the unknown, the rapture of the foretaste, the sense of special guidance—which may, and does, fall upon the humblest Chapel member as fully as upon the most saintly recluse of the cave, or upon the most illustrious princess in the most splendid cloister. In the morning she went to Church with her sister: it was part of her routine: besides, she was not above the gratification of sitting in her Sunday best among other people also in Sunday best. But in the evening she sought the Chapel of Huldah the Prophetess.

Flavia was accompanied every Sunday evening by no less a personage than the Chevalier. This exile was not only a rebel to his King but to his Church. Concerning both he held such views and used such figures

of speech as are common among rebels. In the humble connection of the New Testament Believers, in the little Chapel where they met, in the lowly company there gathered together, the Professor of the New Humanity saw a return to Primitive Christianity, a spark of light in the darkness which should spread and grow until it should illumine the whole world, the Hope of the future, the Salvation of mankind. The other disciples knew themselves to be the one little flock in All the World who held the Truth: it was enough for them. This revolutionary saw a great deal more. Here all were equal to begin with: there was no authority: they had no creed: they were governed by no laws: they all had in their hands the Acts of the Apostles—the work on which, as everybody knows, the Connection chiefly bases its opinions—and could read and judge for themselves. Such a religion, pure, democratic, free, suits such a Social order as the Chevalier burned to establish.

It was strange: the man who had spent the best years of his life in conspiring for the overthrow of Governments, the downfall and death of Kings, the destruction of Church, Property, Rank, and distinction, in company with the murderous, treacherous self-seeking reptiles who are always attracted by conspiracy and the hope of plunder: who cared nothing for bloodshed if only his schemes could succeed: who had fought on barricades and shot down his enemies without any subsequent pang of remorse: who still, after forty years had passed, and at seventy years of age, would rather have had presented him the Hapsburg's head upon a charger than any gift of worldly goods: who was of a

proud and ancient family: who had consorted with gentlefolk and scholars: now walked humbly and in rags beside this humble London girl, to a little Chapel whose worshippers were the lowliest of all those who read and think for themselves. No greater contrast could be imagined than that of the pair thus walking together: the old man with his white locks, his soft mild eyes and gentle manner, his ragged coat and flat cloth cap, and with all these memories clinging to him, beside the girl so neat, so proper, so ostentatiously respectable—Cornelia would have said so genteel, but the word is falling into disuse.

"We are going to Aunt Claudia's Chapel, Mr. Waller," said Flavia. "Will you come too?"

Laurence hesitated. He had entertained visions of a dinner at a West End Restaurant; after an occasional dip into the West End one returns with renewed heart to the simplicity of Bank Side: Sunday evening is not lively among the barges: he had spent three nights running with the poet and Althea and could hardly in decency go there again for a day or two: and all day long Cassie's words about his wandering eyes had been in his mind: he wanted to get away alone and to ask himself solemnly what it meant and whether he really —and whether she had the least suspicion—and what his mother would say—and so on. In times of difficulty one always longs for this solitary colloquy with self, and it never, never, never comes off, because it is so difficult to place our own affairs before ourselves plainly, without deception or illusion—and when a man resolves his hardest to take a calm and dispassionate view of the position he only succeeds in falling into dreams.

"Come with us," Flavia repeated.

"Sir," said the Chevalier, "if you stay at Bank Side without witnessing its chief glory you do yourself an injustice."

Laurence wished to do an injustice to no man, least of all to himself. He hesitated no longer.

"The New Humanity," said the Chevalier, "demands a reformed religion. Primitive Christianity alone is able to satisfy its aspirations and its wants. You do not know perhaps," he added in the sweetest and softest voice possible, a voice of velvet, "that the little Fraternity of our Chapel is the revival of that sweet and holy religion."

"No, I did not know it," said Laurence. "Are you, too, Chevalier, a disciple?"

"I, too. After many years. I have lived a philosopher: I shall die a Christian. In my youth, like many others, I confounded the false with the true: your cathedrals, your Bishops, your priests—they are not Christianity. What that is—we will show you."

"Does your sister go with you, Flavia?"

"No. She is crying in her own room. But she is not cross any more. You said something to her, Mr. Waller, that took away her temper. Althea has been with her this afternoon, but she will not tell Althea anything—or me either. As if we did not know, Chevalier!" She turned to her companion with that smile of bitter sweet triumph that a woman assumes when she has found out a secret.

"Yes, we know," said the Chevalier.

"In that case," said Laurence, "we all know it, and so we need not say anything more."

"I have observed the face of that young man," said the Chevalier, without naming him. "I, who have lived among men of action, have studied many faces, and I have never yet been deceived by any face. The traitor I know, the flatterer also: the luxurious man and the self-indulgent: the liar and the heartless—I know them all. This young man has a bad face. He is false and treacherous: he is selfish: he has no pity."

"The last illusion which will perish," Laurence remembered, "is the illusion which we call love."

Flavia set her lips and nodded her head vindictively. If Mr. Oliver Luttrel should ever fall into the hands of this young woman, Laurence thought, there would be a bad quarter of an hour for him. A political prisoner among the Carthaginian ladies after they had sharpened their nails would not have had a more unpleasant time.

The Chapel of the New Testament Believers is called by some the Upper Chamber and by some the House of Consolation, and among some it has a more sacred name still which may be left to the brethren. It is such a Chapel as may be met with everywhere in the poorer quarters: small, ugly, with a little window over the door and another window, round headed, at the end. It stands in Union Street, which is better known than most of the Southwark streets, because one must pass through Union Street in order to reach Red Cross Street, where there is the most charming little settlement, or Colony, of culture and sweetness in all London, not excepting the Brewers' Garden at the back of the London Hospital.

The Chapel was furnished with benches half filled

with people: at the end was a low platform with a harmonium. Flavia and the Chevalier sat down near the door, nodding to some of the congregation. They all turned and gazed at the stranger in some astonishment. A well-dressed stranger does not often visit the Upper Chamber. Presently, one among them rose and advanced to him bearing a little bundle of tracts in his hands. He was a man of meek and gentle appearance and bright eyes.

"Read them," he whispered earnestly. "They are intended for the Inquirers. You will see that our position is one that cannot be shaken. And they know it." He jerked his head to the right, perhaps he meant those of Westminster Abbey, or those of Lambeth Palace: but he did not explain. "Do not," he added, "resist the power of Truth. Let your heart be open to the voice of Truth."

Just then the door opened and a woman appeared dressed in black silk. Upon her head was a kind of black mantilla which fell over her like a veil. She stood at the door for a moment and pushed back her veil with her hands, looking round the room as if to observe who were present. Her eyes fell upon Laurence and she started. Why did she start? Then the veil fell over her face again and she walked up the Chapel and mounted the platform, taking her seat in an armchair in the middle facing the congregation. This was Claudia. She was curiously like her sister Cornelia, yet with a difference. She had the family nose, but it was softened, so to speak, by a reduction in length and breadth. She was small of stature, like the rest of the family, but she was not stiff and angular like

Cornelia. Although she was now fifty years of age she was still pleasant to look upon: her features were mobile: her hair was abundant and was rolled up in a kind of crown: her eyes were large and lustrous: they should therefore have been sleepy eyes: but on the contrary they were curiously bright and keen. These observations were made during the short space when she stood in the door and looked round the Chapel: after the veil was dropped again her face was invisible.

Felix Laverock came into the Chapel after his mother. At the sight of Laurence he dropped into the farthest corner, hanging his head with every sign of confusion. Apparently, therefore the gift of the mother had not also been granted to the son. Then the service began. There was a small desk at one side of the platform and a harmonium at the other.

The nonconformist service is always much the same whatever Truths are preached. They sing hymns: read and expound the Scriptures: the minister offers a long prayer: and then followeth the sermon.

In this case the sermon was not one of fire and wrath, but of praise and faith: with simple and homely experiences: it was preached by one who, like a Quaker, spoke because he thought he had something to say. When he sat down another rose and said what was in his heart: and then another. Meantime the prophetess sat in the chair, motionless, her lace veil hiding her face, her hands in her lap. She did not sing with them: she seemed as if she did not pray with them. Laurence could not keep his eyes from her. He was affected with a strange sense of incongruity. How did this woman come here? She should have been wrap-

ped in a peplum and been attached to the oracle of Delphi. So dumb, so still, so regardless of the folk, may have sat the priestess before the oracle was given.

Then he discovered, while the speakers poured out the thankfulness and joy of their hearts, that the people all seemed to have the same kind of eyes. No doubt there were grey, blue, brown and black eyes among the people: but their eyes were all curiously bright. This kind of brightness goes with the variety of faith which scoffing would call credulity. It is the brightness of enthusiasm. Every crank has such eyes. You will see it in the leaders of mobs as well as in the Captains of the Salvation Army.

The last speaker left the beaten path of personal experience in order to consider the position of the Church—their Church. The discourse was clearly intended for the stranger within the gates, because the speaker looked at Laurence, and the people turned round and gazed at him to see how he would receive the Truth: whether he would take it fighting, or whether he would fall prostrate under its mighty influence and own that never before had he known what was the Truth or where that article was to be obtained. If he had been the Prince of Wales himself this stranger could not have been the object of greater curiosity.

The position, in fact, of the New Testament Believers is exactly that of the Primitive Church as described in the earlier chapters of the Acts of the Apostles. The speaker pointed this out with great care. As in those days of simplicity and faith, so in the Connection all were equal—the brethren did look as if the average weekly wage was from thirty-five shil-

lings to two pounds a week. As in the Early days, so in the Connection, if one were to grow rich—the thing seemed too remote to affect the imagination of the hearers—he would divide his wealth among all. There was true brotherly love among them—where else outside the Connection could that be found? They had no creed or formula, but all was done by faith. They had no priests, but all were equal. And as to the gift of Prophecy and Tongues, where, outside the Connection, could it be found at all—oh! where else—where else—than in this humble Chapel of a few chosen believers, snatched from the wilderness of the unbelieving world?

Flavia and the Chevalier nodded approvingly as each point was made. When it came to the last Felix in his corner contorted his limbs and hung his head.

Then the harmonium played a few chords and the people began to sing, sitting in their places, a long chaunting monotonous hymn, which rose and fell, verse by verse, and produced a most strange effect upon one at least of the gathering. Laurence felt as if he were being mesmerised, or were inhaling laughing gas. Already he felt his head swim, his limbs tremble, his senses reel. Then the people sang their hymn louder and faster, and they caught hands and stood up, and some swayed their bodies to and fro in rhythm like children at a musical drill: and some leaped and some wept aloud and some laughed. The harmonium, meantime, kept playing a monotonous droning accompaniment. The prophetess sat motionless.

Suddenly she sprang to her feet.

Then the music stopped and the people became

silent and sank down upon the benches, panting, gasping, eager for the voice of Prophecy.

The woman tossed back her veil over her shoulders and threw out her arms.

. . . . . .

It lasted for ten minutes. It flowed like a cascade after rain: it was turbulent in its headlong rapidity. It seemed to issue from the lips but not from the brain: in this way the ancient priestess was wont to deliver the oracle as if it came not from herself. It was full of ejaculations and of Scripture phrases. It seemed to uplift the souls of those who listened with open mouth and kindling eyes: it filled them with rapture. As for Laurence, he was like one who reads a book of spiritualism and finds here a phrase and there an idea which he comprehends, and presently lays down the volume and looks around and discovers that he is, after all, in a world of sense and of touch. Nothing that the prophetess uttered touched him: it was unlike anything he had ever heard: he was bewildered. But the mesmeric feeling left him when the singing ceased. The gift of Prophecy! what had she prophesied? It is not, we know, the gift of foretelling, but of outspeaking. What had she outspoken? He could seize on nothing.

The Prophetess! This remarkable person—could she really be a daughter of Vicesimus and a sister of Lucius, Cornelia, and the unfortunate Julia? Could she really belong to that respectable family? She was utterly thrown away in this obscure corner of the city. She should have taken a West End Chapel and started a new Church for the rich instead of for the poor.

There are always so many rich people in search of a new Gospel that the revival of the early Church could not fail of success. A new Gospel for the Rich has not, in fact, been attempted since the Foundation, now fifty years ago, of the Catholic and Apostolic Church of St. Irving. In the Borough her gifts were thrown away. Who careth for the religion of Bank Side? Who concerneth himself with the tendencies of Southwark? A remarkable woman. If a charlatan, then one of the finest water. If an enthusiast, then filled with enthusiasm of a most uncommon kind. A truly remarkable woman.

She stopped as suddenly as she began, sitting down and drawing the veil again over her face. The people began to sing another hymn—of praise and gladness.

When the hymn was finished the Prophetess arose again, but quietly, and threw back her veil.

"A portion for Brother De Heyn," she said, softly. "Hast thou said in thy heart, it is vain to serve the Lord?"

The congregation regarded Brother De Heyn with admiration and envy. He had received a special message.

The Chevalier himself, however, bowed his head stricken with remorse. There had been grumblings with his lot. Rebellious thoughts had truly troubled his soul in his thankless drudgery of the week.

"A portion for Sister Flavia. Be angry for thy sister's sake, but sin not. Leave transgressors to the Arm of the Lord."

The tears came into Flavia's eyes.

Then the Prophetess looked straight before her.

But Laurence started and changed colour at her next words:—

"A portion for the child of Lucy." What did she mean? "Thou art come from the Isles of the East where is the land of Ophir. Peace be upon thee and a blessing. Amen—Amen."

The congregation stared. Who was the child of Lucy? Was this a dark saying like unto those riddles which in Bunyan's story cheered the heart of Mansoul?

Then they sang another hymn, a hymn of dismissal, while the saucer went round and the pennies rattled. He who carried the saucer counted out the money when he had finished, and entered the amount in a little book. Then he gave it all to Felix, who slipped it into his pocket with a blush of shame. Laurence now understood why he came to the chapel—his mother it was who ran this little chapel and paid the rent and the gas, and he himself was Paymaster, Clerk or Assistant Treasurer, though not as yet numbered with the Faithful.

"And how on earth," Laurence asked himself, "did the Prophetess know me? Child of Lucy—of course she could mean none but me."

## CHAPTER IX.

### "LET BROTHERLY LOVE CONTINUE."

WHEN one is quite young, many opinions are strongly impressed upon the mind which have afterwards to be modified or abandoned. For instance, we used to be taught by certain allegorical pictures that at some definite moment—say when one had arrived at the great age of eighteen—a choice would be offered us—a choice for life—an alternative. It would be quite clear and plain: there would be no mistake at all about it: on the one hand a broad and flowery road presented to our consideration, down which thoughtless young people would be running hand in hand, laughing, singing, drinking champagne, and having the finest time possible, so that everyone would envy their happiness. On the other hand a narrow and rocky path beset with thorns. But we knew very well which we should choose: for, look you! the benevolent angel who offered this choice would also show us the end of the flowery road which these cheerful young people could not see—otherwise they might have gone on dancing and singing where they were, but they would certainly have gone no further. For it ended in a flaming portal, and on either side there was a dancing devil with a pitchfork, enjoying the pleasures of anticipation, grinning to think how these light-hearted young people would very soon begin to laugh on the other side of their mouths—the

inside, I suppose. Also, over the rocky path the angel would show that there were hovering other most lovely angels. We never had the least doubt which we should choose. In those days we also considered that the older one grew, the wiser we should be, the more virtuous, the stronger and clearer in vision, the better able to see the Kingdom of Heaven itself, and the open gates of the New Jerusalem. Now, alas! these beliefs have undergone profound changes. As regards the young man's choice, for instance, we have learned that it is offered him every day all through his life, though doubtless there are some days when the choice is of greater importance.

A chance or choice was one day presented to Oliver Luttrel. Unfortunately it was not granted unto him to behold the dancing devils at the end of the road. Indeed, in making his choice, he really did not understand that he should meet this disagreeable pair at the close of his journey: he thought that this road, like the other, would lead him to a certain arm-chair much in the thoughts of ambitious youth—the Presidential Chair of the Royal Society. Everything now leads to a Chair. Fame, while she blows her trumpet, bears aloft a Chair instead of a Crown. It has got arms and a high back. Sometimes it is a Presidential Chair—that of the Royal Academy, Royal Society, Geographical or other learned Corporation: sometimes it is a Bishop's Throne: sometimes it has a woolsack upon it: sometimes it is a Judge's Chair of State. Sometimes it is nothing but a plain Windsor Chair—one remembers the sight of an empty arm-chair which once brought tears to the eyes of all who speak the

English tongue. Never a laurel wreath any more. There is one advantage in the exchange: the laurel crown was sometimes spiky and too often a misfit. I say, then, that Oliver, when he made his choice, thought that he was in no way hindering or interfering with the career he had set before himself. As if the Chair of Honour was ever to be reached along the road where those foolish virgins dance!

The serpent tempted him. The serpent came in the shape of his brother, the man upon town, book-maker, gamester, rook. This gay and gallant brother, handsome, well groomed and dressed, with his pockets full of money, dragged him out of the quiet routine of his laborious days and took him into the Kingdom of Misrule. Most young men at six-and-twenty have seen enough of this realm to know that it is not for them. In the case of Oliver, a youth spent in hard work and the nurture of ambitions: three or four years in the Laboratory of a quiet German University: little society with other young Englishmen: left him inexperienced in the ways of Queen Luxuria. He was not a cynic, one must affect experience if one hath it not. If he knew not the seamy side of that world, he knew not its attractions.

Suddenly he was plunged into the very inner ring of this world, where everybody seemed brimful of happiness, everybody seemed rich, nobody had apparently anything to do but to sing and dance and feast and laugh.

Consider. This was a great change from the quiet life of the Laboratory. And in every man there is a sleeping devil.

Consider again. His own people—his brother and sister—astonished and dazzled him. Julia—the divine Giulia—formerly Sal—who could approach her for beauty and for careless prodigal generosity? And his brother—formerly Pharaoh—once in rags—Oliver remembered of the former life nothing but the rags—there was no one, even among his own friends—to Oliver they appeared to be friends—who could compare with him for looks or for cleverness. He was a man of many accomplishments: he could play the fiddle or the banjo or the piano: he could sing—all in a swashbuckler, cavalry-camp sort of way: he could ride: he could tell stories: he could make up and act: he could also—but this Oliver learned afterwards—play every game of cards and perform all known tricks with these valuable and amusing toys. The knowledge was extremely useful to him though he kept it a secret. This handsome roystering gallant was Oliver's brother—wonderful to relate—his brother! And he had always expected to meet his brother—if ever he should, by misfortune, chance upon him—in rags.

How had they arrived—this pair—at this present greatness? In the world of the Show, Circus, and playing folk, such instances of rapid rise are not unknown. The clog dance on a carpet at a racecourse: the song and hornpipe in a public-house: the daily practice of arts and accomplishments which delight the world and pull in the money: an engagement with a wandering circus: then one with a music hall: the discovery of unknown talent: the development of personal graces: careful teaching, quick learning—put all these together and you may understand how the pair of ragged

Romany children managed to push ahead and presently put on splendid raiment, and assumed some of the manners of the swell.

This brother began to come often to the Laboratory. At first he looked about the place with curiosity. Then —finding that no money was to be made by electric apparatus—with contempt. Strange that one of his people should take up with a pursuit by which no money could be got! Why else should a gipsy ever learn anything?

"Sonny," he said one day, after trying to understand what the scientific profession really meant—"why don't you chuck it up?"

"Chuck it up? Why—what else could I do?"

"Something useful. Something that would bring in the chips."

"I shall get a better salary some time, I suppose."

"A hundred and fifty pounds a year! Three pound a week!" Mr. Stanley made this calculation with infinite contempt. "To think of a likely chap like you content with a hundred and fifty! To be sure you can't do anything; but I'd teach you. Can't you get something out of the old man?"

"No—he has nothing. He gave me all he had left in order that I might stay on in Germany."

"Three pound a week! Well, you've seen how we live—and you seem to like it."

"It is a kind of life," said Oliver calmly, "that I had never seen before. Of course I like it. But a man who has got work to do can't sit up all night."

His brother laughed. "Suppose that is his work," he said. "Well, three pound a week, my son, won't

run to it. Most of the young fellows you saw the other night chuck away that much and more every night of their lives. They have their fling—and a good fling too—and it's well worth all the money. But, you see, my chap"—he became here very didactic—"wherever the money is flung around—whether at a Fair, or a Horse Race, or the Stephanotis Club—gentlemen like me are always standing about to pick it up. Ye—es: that's my walk in life. I pick it up. Oh, there's a hundred ways—all on the square—to look at. The best of all ways is a little game, just for two—piquet or écarté for choice—with me on one side of the table and a nice young gentleman with his pockets full on the other, and the champagne ready and within reach on the sideboard. No big jobs and IOU's for me: let me collar the ready cash, whether it's five pounds or fifty, and be ready to give revenge for another evening. Then, my son, nothing nasty can be said. And no partners. Some of my pals work in couples. They go backwards and forwards to America: they catch the Colonial Juggins and they work the railways. Everyone has got his own way, and that is mine. Well, you see, Oliver, since that's your new name, the night's my working time, and, if I went to bed at ten, it would be in bed at the workhouse."

Some men would feel ashamed should a brother openly avow that he consorted with young fellows having their fling solely in order to win their money. Oliver did not. Perhaps this laxity was due to hereditary lawlessness in his blood: perhaps to that remarkable education which left him free to create his own morality and to select his own religion: perhaps he knew already

that his brother must be making the money which he so freely scattered in some such way as this.

"Well, sonny," the brother continued. "In a year or two the young swells are cleaned out. But there's always a new lot coming along. My pals and me—we stay until the place gets too hot for us. You can come among us if you like. But you've got no money to lose; and so, my dear boy, if you come, you must learn how to pick it up."

Oliver made no reply. His brother, he perceived, would not understand that it was the mirth and the music, the singing, the laughter, the carelessness that attracted him. It seems a poor kind of temptation for a young man of study and science; yet, if you drop your hook into the sea with such a bait, you are pretty sure to catch your young man, whatever be his profession.

"Oliver," Pharaoh went on, changing the subject, "that was a queer story you told me the other night about all that money—you know."

"Yes. It is a queer story," Oliver replied, with a little effort.

"And the girl who ought to have it all——"

"No—it is her father who ought to have it. The girl's got nothing to do with it."

"How long is it since you found out?"

"Only a fortnight or so. I found an old letter in a desk and I read it and put things together."

"Ye—es, and you've been thinking about it ever since."

"Naturally."

"As you say. The heir is the dead man's nephew, and you say that he won't claim it."

"He won't claim it. He only heard the other day that his uncle was dead—heard it accidentally; he never hears anything and he knows nothing. When I told him there was no Will and that it was all his—all his—all that great property his—well: he said he would never claim it. Says there is a curse upon it. A curse! If I had it I would soon show what I thought of the curse."

"What would you do with all that money if you had it?" asked his brother softly.

"I would build a Laboratory for myself. I would —but you don't understand——"

"No fun? No little suppers?"

Oliver laughed. "Yes," he said, "I would take my share of amusement too. But my work should come first."

"He won't claim it! Lord! I never knew people could be built that way. And he's got a daughter. Now: if he were to get that money and then become a Percher, it would all go to that girl?"

"I suppose so."

"Then it's hers by right, isn't it?"

"I suppose so."

"Yes. I've been thinking over that story more than a bit, and over the way you thought of. There's something in it."

"What way?"

"Don't be a fool, Oliver, because, though you may have been a bit on, you were not so far gone as to forget."

"What I said the other night," Oliver replied quickly, "was a mere fancy. It meant nothing."

"A mere fancy, was it, though? Well, my boy, it was a very artful fancy."

"I said, if such and such a thing were to happen."

"How the devil is it to happen if someone don't make it happen?"

Oliver was silent.

"Now, look here, sonny. The money ought to be kept in the family, where it belongs, oughtn't it? That's justice. If the Queen rakes it in—that's injustice. Is one man's stubborn folly to keep that money out of the family? Certainly not, if we can prevent it. How can we prevent it? Very easily, says you. Only—one good turn deserves another. If the girl gets the money, she must take you with it. That's fair, isn't it?"

Oliver said nothing.

"I've said this to myself over and over again."

"You don't understand the thing at all," Oliver burst out. "I'm sorry I ever mentioned it to you. Do you think the girl is the sort—the sort that you know —to whom one could even hint at such a bargain?"

"One woman, I take it, is like another. And I never met the woman yet who was above thinking of money. Or the man either," he added with impartiality.

Oliver said nothing.

"Well then, supposing that little idea of yours could be carried out——"

"I will not touch it. I will have nothing to do with it."

——"by somebody else. I suppose if you were married to the girl you could prevent her from imitating her fool of a father. Suppose you begin by getting engaged to her——"

"I have thought of it," Oliver replied gently. "In fact, I have made a beginning."

"Without an engagement or a marriage, it would be no use thinking of it."

"It is no use, I tell you. I can't think of it."

"Well then, someone else must. Look here, Oliver, this is too good a thing to be let go. I'm going to make you rich. Can you, to begin with, get engaged to this girl?"

Oliver considered for a few minutes. While he sat considering, his face changed. It became once more, as it had been in the old days when he was a half-starved child, a face as of a skull with a tight skin over it, crowned with a thick black mat of hair.

"Yes," he said sullenly, "she shall be engaged to me, whether she likes it or not."

"When she is, let me know." Mr. Stanley rose as if to go. "Time enough then."

"What do you mean to do?" Oliver asked with alarm.

"My boy, you shan't be put to the least trouble, or danger, or difficulty in this matter. I know a poor devil—a lawyer he was once, but he came to grief over the money—couldn't count it, I suppose—who'll do the whole job. He's paralysed now: lives by writing whatever he's told to write. You want a certain document. Give him the names and the signatures, the dates and all about it, and that document, whatever it is, will be ready to time."

"He knows your name, I suppose?"

"If you suppose that, you suppose I am a fool. No, my son; he does not know my name. And if he did,

nobody knows that I'm your brother. And as for you, he's never seen you, nor heard of you, and you won't come into the business at all till the end."

"And when we've got the document, what then?"

"We'll think of that afterwards. Can you get the signatures?"

Oliver opened a drawer and drew out a paper.

"Here is an old deed. I picked it up in Joe Mayes's office the other day. It contains the signature of Samuel Norbery. The other signatures are his witnesses—Joseph Mayes and an old clerk who is dead."

"Oh! Who is Joseph Mayes?"

"He was Mr. Norbery's clerk, and now calls himself his successor. He's got some of the papers of the old business."

"Oh! He's got the papers. I suppose he might have been one of the witnesses if a will had been made."

"Very likely. Most likely."

"Do you know him?"

"Yes—very well. I have always known him."

"Humph! If such a will were found among the papers, what would he be likely to do, now?"

"He would certainly try to make terms with the parties concerned before he showed the document."

"Good man! Well now—supposing—listen to me—supposing his name—the name of Joseph Mayes—should happen to be on the paper as one of the witnesses, and suppose he was himself to find the thing among the papers—eh?—without expecting or suspecting—eh?—what then?"

"I don't understand."

"Think a bit. First, he finds—suppose—a will. This startles him more than a bit. Then he finds his own name as a witness. This is another startler. He knows, very well, that he never signed that name. Therefore, not being quite a fool, he perceives that the thing is a plant. Very good. He puts it aside—mind. he don't destroy it—and he thinks it over. The more he thinks it over, the more he begins to remember when and where he signed that will. And mind—he's got to produce it—nobody else—and, if necessary, he's got to swear to it. Nobody else has got anything to do with it. If there's a row they go for him, not for you and me. Do you catch on? It's this way. If he produces the will—he will get from somebody concerned, after the money is secured—a big lump. If he don't he will get nothing. He knows he didn't write the will—he may suspect what he pleases. Let him suspect. And it's all to his advantage that there shall never be any proof. Now, young man, do you begin to tumble?"

Oliver sat down and gasped. The audacity of the proposal filled him with amazement. If the thing could be really done, without any assistance at all from himself! and if the thing, should it fail, be made to appear the work of another man!

"I will take this paper," said Pharaoh, putting it into his pocket. "Now give me the full names. Oh! they are in the deed. But—I say—what about the second witness?"

"Take the man in that paper. It was old Backler's clerk—and he's dead."

"Well—and the date?"

"Make it seven or eight years ago—any day."

"Good. But suppose we were to fix a day when he could be proved to have been out of town?"

"Old Norbery never went out of town."

"Better and better."

"I have learned," said Oliver, trying not to look guilty, "that a will is nearly always kept by the solicitor who draws it. Generally he keeps the letter of instruction if there is any, and the first draft as well. Let us have all those. Here is a letter of Mr. Norbery's, to show the handwriting—and here is a paper drawn in the handwriting of Mr. Backler his lawyer. You see, it is written on large thin blue paper."

"Oliver," said his brother with eyes of admiration, "you've got a head. You will be a credit to your family yet, though you were bought for a fi-pun note."

He took these papers too, and placed them in his pocket.

"There's one thing more," said Oliver. "The old man had robbed his brother-in-law and therefore he hated his nephew. Better let that be expressed in the will."

"How about a condition—the money to go to the girl when she marries Oliver Luttrel—eh?"

"No—no—not that. Say—when she changes her name—on the day of her marriage—when she ceases to be Althea Indagine."

"Yes. I see. That is better." Mr. Stanley made a note to this effect. "That shows a good strong healthy family animosity. When she ceases to be an Indagine. We'll add a little clause about you, I think. Sammy," he added with great feeling: "I really feel

proud of you. You call this just a mere fancy, do you?—with everything cut and dried ready to hand. Just a mere fancy, was it? Well, you shall give that dear girl her money: you shall pay the man—what's his name?—Mayes—a thousand pounds—five thousand pounds. How much is it? Half a million? We'll make the milestones fly. Not a word more till you are engaged. Come to Julia's to-morrow evening. There will be one or two people and a little Nap, or something lively, afterwards. I'll lend you some money. Until this comes off—I'll keep you rolling in money. But, sonny, for Lord's sake don't play with the sportsmen of the Stephanotis Club."

## CHAPTER X.

### THE "SATURDAY REVIEW."

THEY were talking of the Poet.

"Above everything," said his daughter, "I wish that he could go back to the world of letters and rejoin his old companions."

"After all these years most of them must be dead and gone," Laurence replied. "I have been into Fleet Street and searched the old haunts. No poets I am told meet now at the Rainbow, except accidentally."

"You have given him new life, Mr. Waller. If only you could take him back again to the old ways. I dream of his taking up again, even after all these years, the active life which he gave up thirty years ago."

Laurence reflected.

"As for the world of letters," he said, "I know nobody in it. Your father is the only poet I have ever seen. But I might make him willing to find his own way back. May I try—if only for the sake of pleasing you?"

His voice dropped a little: a girl with the least grain of coquetry would have observed a softening of his eyes. But Althea thought not of those things. She was thinking of her father. Better would it have been had she shown some little—any little—sense of what

might be in the young man's heart. Better had he forced her, then and there, to understand. But he was in the Paradise where in a purple mist everything that one desires seems about to happen of its own accord. In such a Paradise one never desires to hurry things. Why shake the tree when the fruit is about to fall? Happy land! Happy those who live in it, though they presently, it must be confessed, get fat and lazy.

He set himself to the task, however—and he succeeded. It was by an artful deception that the moralist cannot but deplore. You shall hear what it was. Now an artful deception of the more elaborate kind takes a little time to arrange. Duplicity is troublesome. Treachery requires stage management.

When his scheme was perfected he repaired to the house in New Thames Street, a paper carelessly rolled up in his hand—it was in the morning—and he boldly knocked at the door of the poet's study. Nothing less than the poet's study, if you please. He knew not, altogether, his own temerity. Yet no one, not even Althea, had ever before ventured to disturb the sacred seclusion of this spot in the morning. Why, it is in the morning that the darling of the Muses gets his finest ideas. The children of Vicesimus did not more religiously respect the sanctity of the Academy. Yet this young man boldly, fearlessly, knocked at the door with less hesitation than if it had been a lawyer's office.

The room into which he entered was lined with books all round the walls from floor to ceiling: there was not a single new book on the shelves, not one whose freshness of binding proclaimed it to be less than thirty years old. The Poet was discovered stand-

ing at his shelves taking down one book after another in the idle manner of one who loves books so well as to love handling them. He was, in fact, "looking up a point." Many idle men are perpetually employed in looking up a point. With his fine, delicate features, his long white hair, his tall figure, he looked every inch a poet. He was clad in a dressing-gown made of some shawl-like stuff frayed at the wrists and ragged at the skirts. Thirty or forty years ago all poets, authors, actors, musicians, dramatists and painters, Bohemians and bachelors, wore such a dressing-gown in the morning—as well be out of life as out of fashion. The dressing-gown was in fact as much a part of the literary profession in those days as the stout-and-oyster supper after the play and the half a dozen goes of brandy or whisky punch after the oysters. The garment was tied about his waist by a thick crimson rope with tassels, once very splendid though now faded; and what with the books, the dressing-gown, the crimson rope, the white beard, and the flowing locks, the Poet looked and felt extremely professional and business-like.

He looked up and smiled a welcome—actually he welcomed a visitor who dared to disturb his mornings. He who had received no visitors for so many years!

"You, my young friend? Come in—come in. You wished perhaps to see my den—the poet's workshop. Ha! ha! A poor place—a poor place—but look around you!" He himself looked round with a little anxiety as to the properties. It is not on the stage alone that we are anxious about the properties. He was reassured. The table was strewn with papers, and these—as they should be—were covered with verses; an open drawer

showed a pile of MSS.; a pen lay upon the papers; three or four note-books lay open; the chair looked as if it had been just pushed back; by the empty fireplace was a long, low leather chair, on the seat of which lay an open book; on a smaller table at the window was a row of books, some open, some waiting, all tossed in an admirable confusion; on the mantelshelf hung pencil sketches, framed, of literary men, famous the generation agone, the memory of whom is now somewhat faded. Mr. Indagine felt on the whole satisfied with the look of his study: it had a certain learned disorder as of the Scholar and the Poet; it showed a wealth of books; it looked like work. One thing alone was wanting. There were no proofs. This defect went to his heart like a knife. It seemed to spoil all. There should have been a pile of proofs—printer's proofs. But—he took courage again—would this omission be perceived by the young gentleman from far Australia?

"You may retire from society, Mr. Indagine," said his admirer, "but you cannot, I observe, retire from work."

"One must work or die. Not to work would be high treason to the Muse. The gift of expression is conferred, I take it, Sir, on the express condition of work."

"You must have done a great deal since you came here."

The Poet sat down in his arm-chair, crossing his legs and resting his fingers one upon the other. It is an admirable attitude for one who speaks words of weight.

"I have worked—sometimes successfully—some-

times, as is the case with all who work on Art of any kind, with less success. The results of thirty years are in this room."

"Then we may expect another volume—many other volumes?"

"Young gentleman, I said work: I did not say, publication."

"Surely—with submission—one includes the other."

"My dear young friend," Mr. Indagine rose solemnly, "I will confide to you that I have had, not ambitions —at my age ambitions are dead—but a Design, a Purpose. I have proposed to myself a posthumous pleasure: I have resolved upon leaving behind me, at my death, my works ready for publication."

"Oh! at your death! Nay, Mr. Indagine——"

"Would you have me give them—my enemies—another opportunity for showing their malice and malignity? No, Sir, no."

"But—thirty years—your enemies are dead by this time. Or they are now powerless. What were you saying the other night? We were talking of popularity and we argued back from Australia to the Mother Country. Think: you took the line that if a man was popular in the colonies he must first have been popular at home, you remember? The inference, Mr. Indagine, though you made no personal application, was obvious, permit me to say, to every one present."

The Poet sat down again and murmured softly, as these grateful words of flattery dropped upon his ear. The young man looked so earnest, so deferent, and with eyes of such admiration, that he could not choose but to murmur and purr.

"Only one inference is possible," Laurence repeated.

The Poet laid his head upon his hand. "You wish me——" he began.

"I wish you to come out of this retreat, where you have shut yourself up too long and to return to the world with the harvest—the sheaves, the golden grain —of your long seclusion."

"To return? No, no—it is too late."

"As for your old friends," Laurence continued, "they are gone. Most of them are dead, and the world has, I assure you, long since forgotten the savage attack made upon your name and fame."

"How? If my verses have become popular, how can the world have forgotten the history of the poet?"

"There are some poets, perhaps, into whose private life the world seldom inquires. It learns that they lead a retired life. No one, for example, has ever written a life of Tennyson—or of Longfellow."

"It would be, I confess, a triumph to appear in the world once more."

"Surely. Though the old circles of which you have told me are long since broken up. By the way," Laurence blushed and hesitated, "there is a curious illustration of that inference—I said it was an obvious inference—which I have just seen in a paper." He unfolded and straightened the paper in his hand. "It is the *Saturday Review.*" He laid it on the table and turned over the pages. "You know the *Saturday Review?*"

"I remember it. Yes, yes—it was started by some men in our set. There was a clever man named—I

forgot his name—who became Editor. The *Saturday Review*—does it exist still? It began cleverly."

"Why, here it is! I should rather think it did exist! There is an article about you in it."

"An article? An article about me?" The Poet started to his feet. "About me?"

"There may have been a thousand about you while you have been hiding away. However, here is one."

"Give it to me—give it to me."

The article was one of those in small type which are found in the middle of the Journal. It was on the single sheet of four pages which is sometimes found in the very middle of the paper.

"It is called," said Laurence, as Mr. Indagine eagerly turned over the pages, "The Poet of a Single Volume."

Mr. Indagine read it aloud. As he read, his voice faltered, his cheek flushed, and his eyes glowed.

The writer of the article began by asking who was Clement Indagine, and what had become of him. He likened him unto a certain Waring commemorated by another poet. He asked why, after one effort, one single volume of verse, which contained promise if not actual finished work, of a higher order than had ever been given to the world since the appearance of Keats's Poems, the writer had suddenly disappeared. This opening sentence it was which made the voice of the reader to shake.

The article occupied a column and a half in length, and proceeded to quote from the poems and to comment upon them, but as in the capacity of humble admirer rather than hard and cold critic. The readers of

the *Saturday Review* must have marvelled greatly at the attitude of this writer, because, to one who read the extracted gems, they did not seem so very wonderful after all. They might even be called commonplace. Now, it is not the wont of this Journal to bestow unstinted praise upon mediocre poets and commonplace writers. Perhaps, however, there were finer passages lying unquoted in the volume. The praise might have seemed to the habitual reader overdone, even on the supposition of the hidden gems, and one who read the paper regularly would perhaps have observed a *je-ne-sais-quoi* in the style not altogether in harmony with the rest of the paper. But Mr. Indagine had not seen the *Saturday Review* for thirty years, and the article was praise of his own work. Therefore he saw nothing strange, forced, or dissonant.

In conclusion the writer said:—

"We have quoted enough from the remarkable volume before us to prove that this unknown author was as a Poet a whole head and shoulders above any of his time, except Tennyson and Browning. In the sweetness and flow of his metres he anticipates Swinburne: in quiet pathos he surpasses Longfellow: in simple unstudied grace he is equal to Austin Dobson: in the dexterity and ease of his verse he resembles Edmund Gosse. The widespread favour with which he is now regarded: the natural manner in which his lines spring to the memory of writer and speaker, and are daily quoted, and have become household words: show that the world at large is, like ourselves, anxious to know what, who, and whence is this Clement Indagine. If it was an adopted name, what was his real name! If

he be one of those to whom the Gods have shown their love in the manner customary to the Olympians, where did he live and when did he die? If he is still living, why has he written no more? Why was he received at first with indifference, or contempt, or worse? By what strange fate has this writer been passed over and neglected by his own generation only to spring into new and vigorous life in that which follows? This is a unique literary phenomenon: and it should be taken to heart by the most unsuccessful. Nay: we believe that the story of Clement Indagine and his posthumous fame —if indeed it be posthumous—will hereafter become as much a commonplace of consolation for the failures in Poetry as the history of the rejection of *Vanity Fair* has been to the novelist who hawks his bolster of MSS. from publisher to publisher. But let someone—someone—tell us—who—who was Clement Indagine?"

The Poet read the last lines in an agitated voice. The tears stood in his eyes: his lips trembled: his cheek was flushed. Then he folded the paper and tried to appear calm and critical.

"This," he said, "is—ahem!—unexpected—I confess, and gratifying—most gratifying. I admit, young gentleman, that it is most gratifying. After so many years to find oneself the subject of such criticism—so appreciative and so generous—is indeed a phenomenon in the History of Letters. It is very gratifying. The language of the writer, I think, is calm, critical—even cold in parts." Oh, Poet! "But it is sympathetic throughout. Perhaps a more typical selection of pieces might have been made for quotation, but the writer speaks from a full heart; his mind is fully charged with the verses—he is sa-

turated with his author. That is as it should be. Young gentleman, you are singularly fortunate. You are a stranger from far Australia—from the Antipodes—yet you—and none but you—bring me the news that I am read and loved out there—out there—and therefore, by inference—yes, yes, by inference—at home. And then you—none but you—bring me convincing proof—clear and tangible proof—that I am a name and a power among my own people."

His voice broke. He sat down and was silent for a space. His eyes were humid.

Laurence, who had smiled while he spoke of the coldness of the writer, now watched him with anxious look. Had he gone too far?

"My ambition," said the Poet, has been achieved. After long years it has been achieved. Now let me depart in peace, since life has no more to give me. I say, young gentleman," he rose with unsteady legs, "let me—let me——"

Laurence caught him in his arms as he fell forward, fainting. The crown of laurel—late plucked, late wreathed—was too much for him.

Ten minutes later he had recovered and was sitting up, the *Saturday Review* still in his hands.

"But for you, Mr. Waller," he said, "but for you I should never have seen this. I cannot, indeed, thank you too much. No, I cannot, I cannot. The sight of this article has brought me such a moment of happiness as I never expected to feel. Will you leave me now? I must think—I must think. No, without you I should never have heard of my own fame. Althea sees no papers. My brother-in-law reads nothing—

Oliver tells us nothing. The Cottle girls, poor children! hardly know the meaning of literature. Leave me now."

"One moment, Mr. Indagine." Laurence took the paper out of the poet's hands, and opening a penknife, he cut out the article. "You don't want the whole paper, do you? I will take that away. Remember, Sir, we must have more work from you."

"Ha! ha!" the Master laughed: the Master threw back his head and laughed: "more work! Yes. You shall have it. More work! It lies ready for you in the drawer."

"And you must return to society. Promise me that you will come out of your seclusion and return to the world."

"Yes, yes—return. That is, I will—I will think of it." He did not laugh at the thought of returning to the world. Laurence remembered the words of his daughter: "The world has become dreadful to him."

"You will come back to a sympathetic world. Your old world of wits is broken up. You will appear in a different world altogether. I am truly fortunate in having been the means of bringing these things to your knowledge."

"Young gentleman," the Poet seized his hand, "I am grateful to you. If you knew—if you could ever guess the half—of what I have suffered from the neglect—the unmerited neglect—of the world—you would realise something of what I feel. Yes—yes—there must be a change. But go—go now—and let me see you later on. I must be alone—to think—to feel—to understand what has befallen me."

All this happened in the morning.

In the evening Laurence, who had been dining in the West, returned about ten.

He looked in, as was his wont. There were signs of excitement and agitation.

"Oh! Mr. Waller," cried Cassie, "only to think! Mr. Indagine is a great man at last! We are so proud. Althea has brought us the article—such a beautiful article! We read it all through. We sent Sempronius to buy a copy of the paper—here it is—but we can't find the article in it."

"No? Then it must have been in another number. Of course. Perhaps in next week's. Never mind. It is a grand thing for Mr. Indagine, is it not?—to find that he has become so famous."

"Felix says that none of the fellows at the Poly ever heard of Mr. Indagine's poetry," said Sempronius from his retreat.

"At the Poly!" Cassie repeated scornfully. "What do they think of at the Poly but gymnastics and lectures and things? You don't go to the Poly for poetry. I have never seen Althea look so happy, Mr. Waller. You have made her as happy as her father."

"The Bank is honoured," said Mr. Cottle, "by this public recognition. Shakespeare, Marlowe, Massinger, Fletcher, Vicesimus Cottle, Clement Indagine! A goodly succession indeed! My father would have been gratified by this public recognition."

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE DOCTOR'S HAPPINESS.

I DO not suppose that anybody ever woke up on a fine summer morning with a greater sense of satisfaction, a warmer approval of conscience, or a more balmy confidence that things were going to happen exactly as they were wanted than Laurence after this cold-blooded deception of the aged bard. He would have danced and performed capers and pirouettes had he known how: he would have sung songs of joy and gladness had he known any, but no such songs are manufactured in these days: he would willingly have dressed himself in purple silk and gone upon Bank Side with a crown of roses on his head and a gold cup, or a lute, or some such trifle in his hand in order to show his gladness after the manner of the ancients. But young men now do never display these outward signs of joy. Alas! His joy was to be turned into sorrow and his laughter into mourning.

The reason of the joy was nothing more than his success by means of craft and subtlety. Reason and argument would have failed with the divine poet. Flattery succeeded. This, indeed, is the only form of deception which never fails. When the fox in the fable—the only fable which is always true at all ages and at all times—got that cheese from the crow and was taking it

home with a smile of satisfaction, he was met by a monkey who assured him, with many bows and smiles, that of all the creatures of the field, none was so truly virtuous, so disinterested, as the Herr Reineke. He was wool all through, said the monkey. He was the only perfectly white creature. He was straight. Benevolence and integrity shone in his eyes. He then entreated the fox, whom he addressed indifferently as Your Grace, or Your Lordship, or Right Reverend Sir, to give him, the worst of sinners, some short discourse upon religion. He himself would hold the cheese during the sermon. A moment later, he administered the moral from a loftly branch.

> Apprenez que tout flatteur
> Vit aux dépens de celui qui l'écoute.

The rest of the story and how the monkey fell a victim to the wolf and the wolf to the pig, who ate up the cheese while the weasel was making up a story, may be read in Phædrus.

Flattery had succeeded. Althea, ignorant of the means, was pleased. Why, the poet swallowed it all, even the grossest bits, with greediness, and when it was finished, only longed for more. Now, he would come out of his retirement—for which he was already prepared by the delusion of wide-spread fame—and go back to the world, whatever that might mean. If he would only do that, only take Althea away with him, what mattered any amount of delusion? Let him even tempt once more the malignity of his enemies. During his thirty years of sulks—what a splendid spell of that enjoyable mood!—he must have made many thousand

lovely lines. But Althea would also go into the world when her father returned to it.

Althea was pleased. Some day he might have to confess to her the deception he had practised. If—when—no—if—a certain termination of his visit should really happen, he would have to make a clean breast. But not to the poet. He who had deceived himself at the outset might harmlessly continue in an illusion so pleasing and so healthful to the soul. Never was man made more happy by a device so simple. This young man felt no real remorse for his deception, but he was certainly uneasy as to the way in which Althea might take it.

How Althea would take it. He stood at his window and looked across the river. Bank Side was very noisy and busy: hundreds of men ran up and down the planks with baskets on their backs: there must have been an immense order from someone for broken glass: scrap iron was certainly in great demand somewhere. But this young man saw and heard nothing. Like Althea, he was fallen into a dream: he saw, somewhere in a bower of bliss, a young man and a maiden: the young man wooed the maiden and she gave him her lips to kiss.

Presently he awoke from this blissful vision and finished his dressing. Then he went down stairs. No one was in the house except Sempronius, whose holidays had just begun. Some boys go to Broadstairs or Brighton or Walton-on-the-Naze for their holidays: Sempronius went into his corner beside the window. But he enjoyed his holidays quite as much as any other boy, because he read all day long—not books from

his grandfather's library — but borrowed books — Scott — Fielding — Defoe — Smollett — Dickens — everybody. Cassie had gone to her photographer's studio; Flavia to St. Martin's; Lucius to his perch on the Higher Branch; Cornelia to her seat in the porch beside the Body. Breakfast was laid for him—and Sempronius was in his place, nose in book.

"Well, boy," said Laurence. "How are your sisters this morning?"

"Cassie cried all night," said the boy, without taking his eyes off his book. "I heard her through the partition."

"Why did Cassie cry?"

"Oh!" The boy shook his head impatiently—what were Cassie's woes to a boy in the middle of "King Solomon's Mines"? "She cried because she's quarrelled with Oliver."

"You think that?"

"I know it's that. Flavia knows it too."

"You have reason for believing?"

"Oh bother," said the boy. "I've seen him kissing her a dozen times."

"This fact, my young friend," said Laurence, pouring out his tea, "taken singly, might seem to favour your hypothesis. The danger, however, of a general conclusion from one or two isolated facts"—but the boy shook his shoulders and put his fingers to his ears.

The rude awakening took place after breakfast when Laurence retired to the Bank for his morning tobacco. There are always a few of the unemployed lounging about here in the morning exchanging ideas. The young swell who had nothing to do was popular among them

because he readily conversed with them, made everybody free of his pouch and proved himself a ready lender of those small sums which it would be an excess of duty to remember or return.

The Doctor it was who rudely awakened him. He came marching briskly along Bank Side on his morning round, and seeing Laurence, stopped to greet him cheerily. The Doctor was always a cheerful man: all doctors in general practice are cheerful: in fact, cheerfulness is the first subject in which a medical student has to satisfy his examiners. Only a specialist is allowed to be sometimes grumpy.

"Why," he said, "you are the very man I was thinking of at the moment."

"I am glad to have been in your thoughts."

"This very morning after breakfast I went to my brother-in-law's study—a thing I haven't done for years. 'Clement,' I said, 'I should like to carry the good news to that new friend of ours who has brought us so much happiness.'"

"Good news?" Laurence was thinking of the article and its effect. "I took in the paper myself, yesterday morning."

"You did. Nothing ever made him so happy. But it is even better news than that. In the evening—in the evening"—the Doctor's voice broke a little. He sat down on the bench and cleared his throat. "Twenty years ago"—he started his information with a new paragraph, as people will when they are much moved—"I began a most interesting experiment. You know something of it, already. I wanted, first of all, to isolate a boy from the more mischievous influences of the age.

I wanted him to grow up free from prejudices, to as to look at truth with clear and steady eyes. I proposed that he should learn, for himself, what we vainly try to teach—how to elevate his soul. I thought that a boy taught to search for truth in all her forms would the soonest arrive at the one doctrine which can ever advance the world—I mean the sacrifice of self."

Laurence thought of the doctrine at which the seeker after Truth had really arrived—the exaltation and worship of self; could the Doctor then be quite ignorant of his pupil's views?

"Well—my son—I have always called him my son—grew up and has become what you know and have seen. Am I right to be proud of such a son?"

"As a man of science," said Laurence, gravely.

"To keep him long enough in Germany to finish his studies ran away with all the little money I had left—not that I grudge it. Never was money better spent. But it is the fact. My brother-in-law, as you may suppose, is not rich. In fact his only property consists of three or four houses bequeathed him by a cousin, and we are not able to do more than live with strict economy. Do I weary you with these details?"

"No, no, not in the least, I assure you," said Laurence, wondering what this might mean. "Pray go on."

"You have taken so kindly an interest in Clement: we all like you so much. Well, I will go on. We are getting old, he and I—and there is Althea. There is Althea."

If the Doctor had not been gazing into the middle of a half laden barge he might have seen the young man's cheeks flush suddenly—and it might have caused

even the least suspicious man in the world to have suspicions.

"There is Althea," Laurence repeated, with an effort.

"We think of her and of her future and we tremble. For, when we are gone what will become of her? We have lived altogether apart from the world—foolishly, I now think—but at first I had my work and Clement had what he thought sufficient reasons: therefore, the girl has no friends: and she will have very little money. What is to become of her? She is ignorant of the world and innocent. She might fall a prey to any designing person. Good Heavens! What will become of her? The question has been before us lately a great deal, and I confess that it makes me very uneasy. After sixty anything may happen to a man. What is to become of Althea when we are gone?"

"Doctor," cried Laurence, eagerly, "let me——"

"One moment, my dear young friend—one moment. Last night, after Althea had gone to bed, Oliver, who was with us, opened his mind."

"Oliver? Oliver?" If his cheek had been crimson before, it now became white. "Oliver opened his mind?"

"Oliver told us that he has long loved Althea—and asked our permission to address her. That is my news. That is why I am so rejoiced. Oliver and Althea—my adopted son and my sister's daughter. They have been brought up together. They know each other entirely. We can trust her happiness to Oliver with such confidence as we should feel in no one else. Her happiness must be considered first. As for other things, there is a great future before him: she will be proud of her husband. That is a great point."

"But there is—— Has Althea—has Miss Indagine —consented?"

"Oliver will speak to her this evening. We agreed that nothing should be said to her by ourselves, and we would not endeavour to influence her. She will not know our own hopes: Oliver has promised not to put this view of the matter before her. It is left entirely to her heart."

"To her heart," Laurence repeated, his own a little lifted by the assurance.

"As for Oliver, he will have a wife who is one of a million. That he knows very well. I have for some time hoped that the influence of love would be brought to bear upon his character. There is a point in the history of every man when love is needed for the full development of his character. He may pass through it without getting love, and without permanent loss, but for most men it is needed. I think that Oliver has reached this point. Love will reveal to him many aspects of humanity of which he is as yet ignorant."

"Yes," said Laurence shortly. "Has Oliver spoken to you about the—the progress he has made towards your doctrines?"

"No: he is feeling his way. He is working, searching, and meditating. He leads the simple life which befits the true scientific spirit. I am content, so far."

"The business will be settled, you say, this evening?"

"Yes. Come in at half-past nine. Come in and rejoice with us. You have brought so much light and happiness to the house that we should like you to be present at our new rejoicing. I haven't bored you with

all this gossip, have I? You look worried. I ought to have noticed that before."

"No—no. You have interested me"—he tried to smile—"much more than you can guess. I am most interested. I will be with you this evening."

The Doctor nodded and laughed and strode away to see his patients.

This was the rude awakening. This was how things were going to happen just as he desired. This was the end of the little story which he had resolved to watch. Now, indeed, he might pack up his things and go home.

But the story was not yet finished.

## CHAPTER XII.

### ALTHEA'S ENGAGEMENT.

ONE who goes a-wooing should dance as he walks, and should laugh when he speaks: he should have the light of love in his eyes, and the flush of yearning on his cheek. He should also show the certainty of conquest in his carriage, which should be valiant and confident, yet not arrogant. To come creeping, with downcast eyes, a cloudy brow, and an anxious pale face, is a poor way to open up a subject so delightful and so full of interest. Yet it was the way adopted by Oliver. He had asked Althea to meet him in her father's study at nine that evening. She certainly knew what he proposed to say: that false start made on Bank Side warned her. Some girls go to such an interview with beating hearts and burning cheeks: Althea went quietly and gravely, with no outward sign of emotion whatever.

Outside, in the opposite room, the two old men sat at their chess table, pretending to play; but one exposed his Queen and the other forgot to take advantage of it. One left a mate easy to be snatched and the other saw it not. Yet, as usual, they sat, chin in hand, as if pondering the way of war.

Althea was the first to keep that appointment. She betook herself to the study at the stroke of nine. Here

she waited, standing thoughtfully at the table, playing with a paper knife. She was thinking how best to frame her answer. Now a girl who intends to accept a man does not generally—at least, one hopes not—cast about for a fitting formula of words.

Oliver appeared in ten minutes. As we have said, he presented little outward show of the passionate lover. Had he been ten years younger you would have said he was sulky. He was nervous; he fidgeted with his hat as if not knowing where to bestow it, as happens to persons unaccustomed to the manners of the Great. Althea watched him curiously. That Oliver should even imagine to himself that he had fallen in love with her was a thing so contrary to all her experience of the young man, that she was fairly puzzled. If you live with a person and watch him every day, and have made such an estimate of his character as seems to suit with every one of his actions and quite satisfies you: and if that person goes and does something totally at variance with that estimate—something that will not fit into it at all—you are justified in feeling bewildered. However, she had come to hear what he had to say.

"What do you want with me, Oliver?" she asked, as he did not at first speak.

"Lucky to find you alone at last," he replied grumbling. What sort of wooer is that who would begin a declaration of love by a grumble?

"I am always alone, I think."

"You are always with that Australian fellow. Well, he's going back to his own country soon." He lifted his eyes sharply to watch the effect of this announce-

ment, which had no foundation in fact. But the girl showed no sign of emotion.

"Indeed?" she said; "he has not told me that he was going. I am sorry. We shall all be sorry. But that is not what you came to say, Oliver."

"You remember"—the lady at this stage generally turns her head and drops her eyes, but in this case the situation was reversed. The lover turned his head and dropped his eyes, while the lady continued unmoved. "You remember, Althea," he cleared his voice and tried to look cheerful, but failed. "You remember," he repeated for the third time, "what I said to you a week or two ago."

"On the Bank, you mean? In the morning? Certainly, I remember that astonishing announcement. Of all men in the world, you—Oliver—my brother Oliver——"

"No—never your brother—nor your cousin—nor any relation at all."

"My brother—in my own mind, always . . . you told me that you loved me."

"I did. And you reproached me on account of . . . about . . . Cassie. You remember that too?"

"Certainly."

"Does that reproach still stand, Althea?"

"No . . . no . . . no, it does not. I have spoken to Cassie and she declares that there never has been anything between you . . ."

"Never anything between us. Quite so. Cassie herself says this."

"Yet I cannot understand it. It is wonderful. After what I have seen—in her eyes and in her face . . .

and in yours, Oliver—could all those signs mean nothing?"

"You have heard, Cassie says there was never anything between us."

"Yet I cannot understand. We all thought . . . well . . . since Cassie says so. But it is wonderful. Almost as wonderful as that you should fancy for a single moment that you are in love with me."

"Yet, Althea, that is the case."

"Say it once more, Oliver. Look me in the eyes and say it again."

He stood facing her. She was taller by an inch and more, and as she stood upright, her eyes bent upon him, he seemed half a foot shorter. And his face had got the old ugly look upon it. He to love this girl! As well think that Comus could love the Lady! But he tried to lift his head and to meet her gaze.

"Althea—I love you"—but his eyes dropped.

She laughed gently not scornfully. "No—no," she said. "There is no love in your voice, Oliver: none in your eyes: and none in your heart. Tell me, what does it mean? Why are you trying to deceive yourself?"

"I do not understand you, Althea. I tell you that I love you and you laugh at me."

"I laugh because it is so ridiculously untrue. And again I ask, Oliver, why you are trying to persuade yourself . . . or me . . ."

"Pray, Althea, since you are so wise, where did you get your knowledge? How do you know the symptoms of love?"

"From the books which you despise. From the poets,"

"Oh! The poets . . . the poets . . . if you are going to believe the inflated rubbish of the poets!"

"I am quite sure—from the poets—that if a man loves a girl his heart is so softened in thinking of her, that he must show his love in his eyes and in his voice and by his manner. You love me, do you, Oliver? Yet there is no softness in your eyes or in your voice. No—my dear Oliver—we have been brother and sister together a good many years: we will continue brother and sister, if you please."

"This comes from living alone. Softened heart! Rubbish! Love, in truth, is the most simple thing in the world. Two persons are attracted towards each other, by the laws of Nature. If the girl is beautiful, as you are, she attracts the man readily. They call this the Power of Beauty. Very good. I am attracted to you by the laws of Nature—which I do not pretend to resist. If you are pleased with me, you will accept me. But we need not talk any nonsense about softening of hearts. Accept me, Althea. You have known me all your life. You have not to find out what kind of man I am: you must know beforehand that I shall do my best to make you happy."

"Indeed, Oliver, I do not know that, at all."

"You can't expect to have an angel made on purpose for you. Better to know beforehand the worst that can be said about a man than find out afterwards."

"What do you think, now—to be practical—will make me happy?"

Oliver sat down and laughed. He had made the first plunge and was more sure of himself. He was more at ease sitting, because Althea continued to stand, and she was taller than himself and dominated him.

"If you talk sentimental rubbish," he replied, "you would be happy with love and the union of two hearts and the mingling of souls and the extravagant worship of a lover. We are not in the Elizabethan age, however. If you talk good honest sense, you want, to make you completely happy, first"—he looked up with a complete return to cheerfulness—"material comfort. Every woman likes to be warm and well clothed and to have a reasonable certainty about the daily bread and jam. You shall have that, assured. Next, you want a complete change in your life. You are at last—I think the coming of this Australian chap has done it—sick and tired of this hole of a place. You want society, art, travel, and the freshness of new thoughts. Well—I will give you that complete change. Confess, now, this is what you want to make you happy."

"Well, Oliver," she said, "you are partly right. Three weeks ago I should have told you that I desired no change. Now, all is altered. It is true. I do most vehemently desire to go away with my father, somewhere—I know not where—anywhere, so that we may see the world and live among cultivated people. This place seems to be choking me—and now, at length, my father is roused from his apathy. Before many days, I am sure, he will be as eager as I can wish to get back to the world. You say I want change. Why, I am my-

self changed—I know not how. Even my old power of dreaming has left me: you used to laugh at my visions: they do not come to me any longer: my mind is full of new thoughts—I am grown impatient. Yes," she murmured, "I want change."

"Why . . . there . . . there . . ." said Oliver eagerly, "half the battle is won. You want change—I will give it to you."

"I think not, Oliver. You have known me all my life, as you say, but you have never given me anything: not a thought or a hope—and you never will."

"Yes—yes—I will give you all—all that you desire."

"No. You are quite mistaken, Oliver," she repeated, "quite mistaken; you do not love me at all. Two people brought up together, as we have been, cannot fall in love: I am no mystery to you: nor you to me. We know each other too well, my poor boy."

"If you mean that I am to expect you to be different from what you are, of course I am not in love. But, Althea, I know you so well that I have no need to imagine graces and virtues. I have seen them and proved them in you."

"Really, Oliver? Then you have concealed your admiration very carefully."

"Would you have had me speak before the time?"

"What time?"

"There is a time for everything. Now, Althea, give me five minutes only—I have my foot in the ladder: I have obtained the lowest post on that ladder of fortune and fame. I have no income yet, to speak of. But that will come. A brief occupation of my present post

will lead to something better. I am a Fellow of the Royal Society—the youngest Fellow. The future is clear before me. So much for myself. Now for you. My father, as I am permitted to call him, has spent upon my education the whole of the fortune which was left to him. He has now nothing but the income which he makes by incessant toil among these people for whom he has thrown away his life. Your father has his slender income, it is true, and it will be yours . . ."

"You mean," she interrupted, "that it would be a good thing for me if I were to marry you. It is a kind of bargain that you propose."

"Hear me out. I should get a wife, for my part —the woman I love—beautiful and attractive—who would advance me socially. A man like myself, without any backing up of relations, wants such a wife. Why, of course, the chief advantage would be on my side. I willingly own it. No man, Althea, can offer in return for yourself anything in the least its equivalent"—he marred this rather pretty speech by a coldness which took the life and meaning out of it. "Yet on the whole you would not lose by the . . . the arrangement. Without nonsense about softening of hearts, think of it in this way, Althea."

She shook her head. "We waste the time," she said; "it is perfectly impossible that I could ever love you."

"You think so because your head is full of poetic rubbish. Wait a little. When we are engaged your thoughts will begin to dwell about me, and I dare say

you will discover all kinds of gifts and graces in your lover that you would pass over in your brother. For instance, you would like your husband to be a distinguished man. Very well, I think I may promise you that he shall be distinguished. I will make science a ladder by which to climb to any heights you like."

"I would certainly like my husband to be distinguished," Althea replied; "and yet . . . No, Oliver. Let there be no more said. I do not love you and you do not love me. What is the use of going on? That is the last word."

Oliver made no reply. For a few minutes there was silence. Then he played his last card, speaking slowly and distinctly. It was the card he had promised not to play.

"There is one word more. It may influence you. In the next room are two old men who love you, Althea—as much as I do. At this moment they are most anxiously waiting to hear the result of this talk."

"Where? Do they know?" She changed colour. "You have told them?"

"I could not attempt to win you, Althea," he replied with dignity, "until I had first asked their consent."

He said this without the appearance of bragging over this virtuous conduct. "They not only know what I am saying to you, but they have given their consent, and that most readily and heartily. Althea"—he was now speaking with greater animation and the appearance of sincerity—"I declare to you—I am sure you will believe this—there is nothing in the world which would

please and rejoice them more. They are growing old: they cannot bear to think that the time may come—and that soon—when they must leave you alone—friendless—and slenderly provided for. In me they see a protector, rather than a lover. Think of these old people, Althea."

The tears came into her eyes. "Yes," she replied, "I am always thinking of them."

"That you should be left alone—in such a place—with no other resources than the precarious rent of a few houses in this poor quarter—no wonder they tremble. At this very moment, Althea, I repeat, they are waiting anxiously to know your answer."

"Oh! what answer can I give? What should I give? Oliver, you must understand. It is impossible—it is impossible—I could never marry you—because, we could never love each other."

"You may change—I am sure you will change—when we are engaged."

"No—no—it is impossible. I will tell them so."

"And if you did not change we could break the engagement. Can you believe that I would hold you to an engagement if you could not love me?"

"Well, but, Oliver, girls don't get engaged only in order to break it off."

"No. On the other hand, very few girls have seen their future husband half a dozen times before they become engaged to him. The love comes after—if it comes at all."

"No . . . no . . . it is impossible."

"Think of my father, Althea. Make him happy in

thinking that we are engaged. He believes in me, you know. He thinks I am going to be the greatest man of science that ever lived—and he thinks that I shall make you happy. For his sake—for your own father's sake, Althea—let us pretend to be engaged until the love that follows will bind us surely."

"Pretend to be engaged?"

"Why not? There are only our two selves—and these two old men—we have no friends. Such a thing might hurt another girl, but it can do no harm to you. No one at all, outside, shall know it. If you find, afterwards, that it cannot come to anything, we can break it off. But to make them happy, let us pretend."

"Is it possible?" the girl asked. "You have actually gone through all this pretence of love only to make your father happy?"

"If you like to think so——"

"It is good of you, Oliver. It was a kind thought. I have never known you do a kinder thing. But no—it is impossible even to pretend."

"Only at first, to make them happy."

"To make them happy I would do anything. But this is nonsense."

"I will release you whenever you please—nay—I will not consider you as bound to me by any other than a conditional promise. We will tell them that it is conditional. You shall be engaged, Althea, with the understanding that you can step out of it at any moment."

In the other room, the chess-board was now pushed aside. The Doctor and the Poet, joined now by Laurence,

waited in silence for the decision. A hundred times during the day had the young man been tempted to go to the Doctor and say, "This adopted son of yours, whom you believe to be working his way to the doctrine of self-sacrifice, is a cold-blooded worshipper of self, the centre of the universe; he is utterly incapable of sacrifice; he has deceived and thrown over the girl whom he once pretended to love; he has no illusions; he is as incapable of honest love as of self-sacrifice. He is not worthy to be even under the same roof as Althea. Yet you rejoice at the possibility of his marrying her. Should they marry, certain misery awaits her." Thus and thus did he frame a speech which he might make to the Doctor or to Althea's father. Yet he could not say it. He had no right to interfere. He had learned by accident what Cassie would refuse to confess openly. He had learned by another accident the man's real views. Yet he could not interfere.

They waited, therefore, sitting in the twilight. They waited a whole hour while Oliver, pleading his cause, broke that promise of secrecy as to their wishes. Laurence stood at the window silent, his face, could they have seen it in the twilight, sad and anxious.

Then the old men began to talk.

"It will make a great difference to us," said her uncle; "we shall no longer be first in her thoughts."

"The house will be intolerable if she has to leave us," said her father; "yet we cannot keep her here after she is married."

"Clement, we must not begin to think of ourselves.

The girl's happiness comes first. And the boy, if I know him, will make her happy."

Laurence at the window groaned.

When the Bell of St. Paul's struck ten, the door was opened and Althea appeared followed by Oliver.

"Congratulate me," said the lover. "Althea is engaged to me."

Althea ran and fell upon her father's neck.

"If it pleases you, dear: if it will make you happy: if it is what you desire——"

"My child, what can we desire but your own happiness?"

Laurence on hearing the fatal announcement instantly stepped quickly and quietly out of the room.

"And we are not really engaged," Althea explained. "It is only—if it will make you happier—a conditional promise."

"A promise——" said Oliver, "a promise—with conditions."

"If I find that I can love him—after a time—we are not in any hurry—and if he finds that he really loves me—but I don't think he ever will—we shall be married. If I find that I cannot love him, at any time —to-day or to-morrow—I am free—that is all. We are not engaged unless—— My dear father, are you satisfied?"

With such conditions and loopholes and hedging round of happiness, ought not the fondest father to be satisfied? It was, however, a pity—a great pity—

that Laurence had not stayed another minute in the room.

"And where," asked the Doctor after taking his share of the kissing, "where is Mr. Waller? He was here only five minutes ago."

"He is no longer here," said Oliver softly. "When he heard my words he ran away. Doubtless he thought he would not intrude on a family occasion so completely private as this."

END OF VOL. I.

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